

## CONTENTS.

---

<b>Editorial Introduction.</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>What is the Bible.</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>How should the Bible be read.</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Meaning of the Names given to the whole and to parts of the Bible.</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Claims of the New Testament to attention.</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Different character of the Books of the New Testament.</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Reasons for a new Translation of the Bible.</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Translation and Exposition—Matt. iii. 1—12.</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Translation and Exposition—Matt. 13—17.</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Translation and Exposition—Matt. iv. 1—11.</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>The Temptation of Jesus Christ.</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Why is the Bible so little understood.</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Knowledge of the original circumstances important in reading the New Testament.</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>The Gospel History entitled to belief.</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Acquaintance with Sacred Geography.</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Maps of Palestine.</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>General Features of Palestine.</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Divisions of Palestine.</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Manner of Christ's Teaching.</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>A Knowledge of circumstances that illustrate the Bible.</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>History of English Translations of the Bible.</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>The Brevity of the Gospels.</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>A good Rule in reading the Bible.</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>Translation and Exposition—Matt. iv. 12—25.</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Translation and Exposition—Matt. v. 1—12.</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>The Beatitudes.</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>Artificial Divisions of the Bible.</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Exposition of Romans vi. 1—10.</b>	<b>165</b>

The Defects of the Common English Version of the New Testament.	177
Use of Words.	201
Why are the Epistles of St Paul so obscure.	211
Eastern Houses.	219
The External Condition, and Political Connexions and Services of the Hebrew Prophets.	227
Examination of Scriptural References.	239
Translation and Exposition—Matt. v. 13—20.	241
Translation and Exposition—Matt. v. 21—32.	249
Meaning of the Word 'Gehenna.'	260
The Poetical Parts of the Old Testament.	267
Unity of Sense.	271
Paul's Epistles hard to be understood.	287

---

## ERRATA.

Although more than common pains have been taken to preserve this work free from typographical errors, several must have been noticed. None of them are of sufficient importance to require mention, excepting these, viz.

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| Page | 4 line 24 for sources read source.      |
| "    | 106 " 22 insert the before men.         |
| "    | 156 " 10 insert do they before prepare. |
| "    | 158 " 29 for brought read proud.        |
| "    | 161 " 21 for course read cause.         |
| "    | 177 " 17 for 1653 read 1603.            |
| "    | 189 " 8 for argument read arguments.    |

THE  
SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETER.

---

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION.

THE discontinuance of the Christian's Manual, which no one could regret more sincerely than the editor of this work, affords an opportunity for introducing a publication, which may in some measure supply its place, while by the singleness of its object and the nature of its plan it may accomplish what the Manual could only partially effect. It has long seemed to me that such a work as I hope this will be is needed. The Bible is imperfectly understood; and its meaning must often be misconstrued or remain obscure, unless *popular* instruction is furnished and is brought within the reach of common readers. There is a lamentable want of books containing proper exposition of Scripture. The Sunday school teacher and the head of a family feel this poverty of means for gaining an acquaintance with those writings, which not only contain their own principles of faith and obedience but are the sources of the best instruction to those who are under their charge. Many Christians in their private perusal of the holy volume wish for the light that others

might without labor or loss impart, by whatever diligent study it may have been acquired.

It is more than three years since the plan of a work to relieve this want occurred to me. Knowing that others older and more versed in biblical criticism would secure more patronage, as they would better deserve it, I have hoped that some one of them would render this service to the cause of christian truth. But no one has undertaken the task, and the present is too favorable a moment to be lost. I therefore propose to make the attempt in spite of the reasons which might dissuade me from assuming such an office.

The design and plan of the Interpreter were stated in the prospectus. It will have one object, to furnish the means of acquaintance with the true sense and value of Scripture, and particularly of the New Testament; but whatever may promote this object will come within the scope of this publication. Each number will probably contain a new translation of some part of the evangelical or apostolic writings, with explanatory notes, and such practical reflections as may be proper for a Sunday school. A large amount of information lies in books, which comparatively few readers see or can peruse. From these I shall not only obtain my own knowledge, but shall freely take extracts. The greater portion of the work will however be original. On subjects intimately connected with the right use of the Bible, such as its character, history and language, I promise myself that I shall receive communications which will enrich the pages of this humble publication.

I publish this work in my own name, because I do not wish it to be considered the organ or the representative of a denomination of Christians. There is likewise more unity in the conduct of a periodical publication, and more ease and frankness in its style, where the editor speaks in his individual capacity. My opinions, my expositions, my remarks will be my own, and I beg that no one else may be held accountable for my mistakes, and that neither my sentiments nor my language may be imputed to any other person. The correspondents from whom I trust that I shall receive assistance will speak each one for himself, and by inserting their essays I shall account myself no farther responsible than for the implied fact, that I deem their thoughts worthy of consideration by the public.

I shall avoid controversy. I shall aim to make the Bible better understood, more diligently studied, more seriously regarded, more gratefully loved, and more cordially obeyed.

Having spoken perhaps too much of myself and my work, I leave it too make friends for itself.

EZRA S. GANNETT.

## WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

THE Bible, says the Christian mother to her child, is the best of books. The Scriptures, says the Christian world, are the oracles of divine truth. The sufficiency of the Scriptures for instruction in matters of religious faith and practice is the great principle of Protestantism.—It is then but a reasonable expectation that the Bible should be regarded and used with a peculiar interest. Yet the reverence of many persons for this book seems to die upon their lips, and an intelligent interest in the Scriptures is comparatively rare. A superstitious notion of their sanctity is almost as unfavorable to a proper use of them as unconcern about their contents. We should know why and how they are to be valued, if we would derive from them the good which they are meant to bestow.

Even he who denies the divine authority of the Scriptures is not justified in treating them with neglect. As containing some of the oldest writings in the world, as presenting some of the finest specimens of composition both in poetry and prose, as offering the soundest maxims for the regulation of conduct, and as the sources from which wise and good men have for ages drawn their rules of life, and which almost the whole civilized world acknowledge as the support of their religious faith, this volume deserves the respectful attention of the sceptic and the infidel. What then should be the views and feelings entertained concerning it by the christian believer—by one who confesses that in it he finds his law and his hope,

An *intelligent* estimation of the Bible will prepare us to understand and use it. Such an estimation supposes the knowledge of certain facts.

1. That it is a *collection* of writings. It is not a volume composed by one person, and published at one time; but a collection of tracts, historical, poetical, didactic, narrative, argumentative, epistolary, written at various times and by different individuals—in different places and at long intervals. They differ in respect to their purpose, style, and character. To consider them as one book proceeding from the same pen is as gross a mistake, as he would commit who should suppose that an edifice, the foundation of which was laid centuries ago, while every subsequent age had enlarged it with additions in various styles of architecture, was planned and executed by one builder.

2. The Bible is a collection of *old* writings. They were composed at different periods, but all of them are ancient. The most modern is nearly eighteen hundred years old; the most ancient unquestionably more than three thousand. I need not here remark on the importance of this fact in enabling us to judge correctly of what we read. Every book bears more or less the stamp of its age, and this should be considered that we may obtain from the perusal either its spirit or its meaning.

3. The Bible, as it comes into our hands, is a *translation*. We have it indeed in the original tongues, but most readers see it only in an English version. It was written in Hebrew and Greek, nei-

ther of which is now a spoken language.\* This circumstance should be remembered in studying its pages, as we shall not then be surprised at some obscurities, nor be unwilling to admit an alteration which will more faithfully exhibit the sense of the original.

4. The Bible is a book of *divine instruction*. It contains the records of God's dealings with man as a recipient of moral truth. It presents us with the history of true religion. It informs us what God has said and done in a supernatural or unusual manner for the improvement of men. The Scriptures teach us all that can be known of the miraculous revelations with which our world has been favored, and they teach us all that we need to know of our duty and destiny. Hence they have been called the divine word, or the Word of God, because they preserve what prophets and apostles and Jesus Christ, teachers inspired by God, spake as he gave them commandment.

5. The Bible is a work of *human composition*. It is written in human language, and must be interpreted according to the rules used in ascertaining the meaning of human language. This principle, however it may have been disregarded, is too obviously true to need the support of argument. If the Bible communicate a revelation from God to men, its language must be such as men can understand; else there is no revelation. The apostle's inquiry is pertinent and forcible in this connexion; 'except yo

---

\* The modern Greek is a different language from that of the New Testament.

utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? Except the book be intelligible, how can it give instruction? In addressing men, God uses the language of men; and they who inscribed on the pages of holy Writ the record of his truth used the language of their contemporaries, and observed the same laws of composition which they would have observed in writing on any other subject.

A proper regard to these facts will assist us much in an intelligent use of the Bible; if we neglect them, it will be impossible for us to arrive at a just understanding of Scripture. There are other facts which should be remembered; but these lie at the very foundation and commencement of a study of the Old or New Testament.

---

#### HOW SHOULD THE BIBLE BE READ.

IN the previous article we have noticed some truths of so plain a character that I have called them facts, which it is proper for us to have in mind whenever we open the Scriptures. They may prevent our making serious mistakes to which a disregard of them must expose us. But supposing that we begin our perusal of the Bible with a right apprehension of the nature of the volume, we shall derive little benefit from it unless we maintain a suitable state of

mind and read it in a proper manner. Let me offer some suggestions on this point.

There are two objects which every Christian must have in reading the Bible. One is to ascertain its meaning, the other to receive the impression it should make on his conscience and heart; or to understand and to feel it. One is an intellectual, the other a moral exercise; one affords knowledge, the other spiritual improvement. Neither of these objects should be sought alone. They are united in the purposes of Heaven; and ‘what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.’ To secure them conjointly these rules, among others, may be observed.

The Bible should be read with interest and seriousness. It is entitled to our reverence by its character. If it speak truth, that truth deserves our most anxious regard, and the vehicle by which it is conveyed to our minds should be treated with respect. If a mortal should leave the counsels of united wisdom and love written down for our use, we should highly prize the book, and should look on its pages with a feeling kindred to that with which we gaze on the picture of a venerated friend. In the Scriptures we have the counsels of divine wisdom and infinite love, instructing us upon our highest, our everlasting interests. We should be the more careful to preserve this serious interest in the Scriptures, as our familiarity with them may dispose us to treat them lightly. They were in our hands in childhood before we knew their worth, and they are found among the ordinary furniture of our houses;

and so may it always be; but this circumstance should put us on our guard, lest we fall into an indifference about the volume which will hinder if it be not fatal to our improvement.

The Bible should be read with candor. If we come to its perusal with minds warped by prejudice, how can we fairly judge of its contents? It is not easy for us to set aside the prepossessions of early life, but on so momentous a subject as the truth which shall make us 'wise unto salvation' we ought to exert ourselves to remove every bias, which might impede us in seeking a knowledge of the Scriptures. If a great earthly interest were involved in our right apprehension of a document submitted to our perusal, how anxious should we be to examine it with clear and unprejudiced minds, that we might learn its exact contents. But the peace of our immortal souls may be the fruit of a right understanding of Scripture. How plain then is our duty in respect to independence of preconceived notions and of human authority.

The Bible should be read with a docile temper. Unless we are willing to be instructed, we shall gain little knowledge or improvement. The desire of instruction should make us patient learners. An humble and teachable frame, as it is the best for the usual habit of the mind, is particularly suited for a profitable study of the Scriptures; is indeed indispensable to it. Whether we use them 'for doctrine, for reproof, for correction or for instruction in righteousness,' their efficacy will depend upon our faithfulness in allowing them the privilege of

personal address. They must speak to our souls, to our sensibilities and consciences. Self-application must give them this power.

The Bible should be read with an active mind. The various faculties of reason, judgment, memory and imagination, with which the Creator has endowed us, should be here employed where they will find the noblest exercise. Some persons read the Bible mechanically: it can do them little good. An intelligent perusal of the Scriptures supposes that the intellectual as well as the moral powers are engaged. How is a mere tracing of words with the eye any better than the vain repetition of prayers or the counting of beads? I know of nothing which allows, and in my view requires, more various and diligent employment for the mind than the perusal of the Scriptures; that their beauties may be unfolded, their peculiarities distinguished, their instruction comprehended, or their proper influence realized.

The Bible should be read with the intention of making it its own interpreter. Few Christians probably know how much the book may be used for illustrating and explaining itself. Some parts that are separated to the eye should be held in connexion by our minds, as the book of Acts and the Epistles of Paul; parallel passages or sentiments can be brought together; passages that relate to the same subject may be collected to prevent our receiving a partial view of the truth; and different texts in which the same word or phrase occurs may be compared, that its usual meaning or the varieties of

signification which it will bear may be discovered. A Concordance is a convenient book for reference, but care should be taken that we are not led by the use of it into a merely verbal comparison of scripture with scripture, when we shall mistake sound for sense and be established in error rather than conducted to the truth. A reference Bible, (i. e., a Bible with marginal notes of passages that may be examined in connexion with each other for the sake of mutual explanation,) is also a very serviceable book, if it be used with discrimination and independence. Most if not all such notes having been made under the influence of belief in particular doctrines, concerning which there may be room for doubt, we should not trust implicitly to their correctness. We may avail ourselves of the collector's industry, without relying on his judgment.

I will only add, that the Bible should be read frequently. No one can determine for another how often he should take it up, nor how much time he should devote to its pages. Circumstances will suggest a different rule for different persons; and with some persons a rule may be less beneficial than freedom to follow their own inclinations. Still it cannot be improper to urge upon Christians the frequent perusal of the sacred volume. Unless they often recur to its instructions, the fire of religious sentiment in their hearts will burn low; and there will be reason to fear that their omission to read it arises from a distaste of its contents. In general we may confidently advise, that some moments of each day should be given to the Scriptures. If in

the morning, we shall obtain excellent matter for our minds to use in the intervals of business, as well as salutary counsels and blessed comforts that will cheer and guide us amidst our cares. And after the labors and temptations of the day, we may find here refreshment for our wearied spirits.

---

MEANING OF THE NAMES GIVEN TO THE WHOLE,  
AND TO PARTS OF THE BIBLE.

A BRIEF explanation of the terms by which we designate the Bible and its several parts will not be out of place here, and may be useful to some of the younger portion of readers.

The word ‘Bible,’ which we commonly use in speaking of the sacred writings, is nothing but the Greek word for ‘book’ converted into English by a change in the termination. ‘The Bible’ therefore means the book;—*the* book, by way of eminence, as entitled above all other books to this name.

‘The Scripture,’ or ‘the Scriptures,’ is of similar origin and has nearly the same meaning. It is the Latin word for ‘writing’ turned into English by the alteration of a single letter. The ‘Scriptures’ are *the* writings; by way of eminence again, as being the best writings in the world.

We call them also the *sacred* writings, the *holy* volume, the *holy* Bible; because they contain divine truth and instruct us concerning God and *sacred* or *holy* things.

'Testament' is another word made from the Latin by a very slight difference,—by only dropping the two last letters. Its proper meaning is a will; but the original was also used to signify an oath or covenant. When we speak of the Old or the New Testament, we mean the old or the new covenant. God is represented as having made two covenants, the first with the children of Israel through Moses, the second with us and all who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ; according to those words of the prophet Jeremiah, (chap. xxxi, 31—35,) which are quoted in the epistle to the Hebrews, (chap. viii.) We commonly speak of the Jewish and the Christian *dispensations* rather than of the Mosaic and the Christian covenants. As almost all those parts of the Bible which were written before the coming of Christ relate to the religion or history of the people of Moses, and as all the books which were written after the advent of our Lord relate to his life and religion, the former are called by one name, the *old testament*, and the latter the *new testament*, or *covenant*.

The books of the Old Testament received their present names from their subjects or from their authors. *Genesis* is the Greek for 'beginning,' and is applied to that book which gives an account of the creation and of the early history of our world. *Exodus* is (with the change of a letter) the Greek for 'departure;' and in this book we have an account of the 'going forth' of the children of Israel from Egypt. *Leviticus* contains the laws relating to the priesthood and the Levites, the descendants of Levi,

one of the sons of Jacob, whose prosperity were set apart for the performance of religious rites under the Mosaic dispensation. *Numbers* is so called from the numbering of the people, of which an account is given in the two first chapters. *Deuteronomy* is formed of two Greek words which mean ‘second law,’ because it is principally a repetition of the laws which had been already recorded. These books compose the *Pentateuch*, or (according to the signification of the Greek words from which this is made) the five instruments or works of which Moses is supposed to have been the author.

*Joshua* relates the history of the Israelites under this leader, and is also ascribed to his pen. *Judges* continues the history of the same people under the rule of the Judges. *Ruth* contains the beautiful story of Naomi and her daughter Ruth. The first book of *Samuel* describes the fortunes of the Israelitish nation under this prophet, and for a time subsequent to his death; and the greater part of it may have been composed by him. The second book of *Samuel* also bears his name, though it could not have been written by him. The two books of *Kings* pursue the history of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah till the Babylonish captivity. The *Chronicles*, of which also there are two books, repeat the annals of the same period. *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* contain a narrative of transactions in which these illustrious men were especially active. *Esther* exhibits important circumstances in the life of the Jewish queen of Ahasuerus. *Job* describes the affliction and conduct of an Arabian patriarch. The book of

the *Psalms* presents us with the effusions of the Hebrew bards. *Proverbs* preserves the maxims of the wise king of Israel and other sages. *Ecclesiastes*, or the Preacher (for such is the meaning of the word) offers the counsels of wisdom which the son of David had collected from experience and study. *Canticles*, or Song, commonly known by the name of Solomon's Songs, derives its title from its character. The books which follow, to the end of the Old Testament, are inscribed with the name of the *Prophets*, whose predictions and warnings they record; with the exception of the *Lamentations*, which Jeremiah poured over the desolate city of Sion.

The New Testament begins with the *Gospel* according to St Matthew, or his account of the ministry of him who brought 'good news' of salvation to mankind. The four Gospels are inscribed with the names of their respective authors, two of them apostles of our Lord, the two others early disciples of the christian faith. The *Acts* of the apostles recites the labors and sufferings of the first preachers of our religion, but particularly of Paul who was emphatically the apostle to the Gentiles. Then follow the *Epistles*, or letters addressed by Paul to the churches or individuals whose name they bear; till we come to the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, or the Jewish Christians, about the author of which there is some doubt. The Epistles of *James*, *Peter*, *John*, and *Jude* are distinguished by the names of the writers. The volume closes with the *Revelation*, (sometimes called after a Greek word of similar force, the *Apocalypse*) a vision of the future fortunes of the christian church.

## CLAIMS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TO ATTENTION.

CHRISTIANITY has been in the world eighteen hundred years, extending its authority until now the number of those who live under its institutions and who bear its name is estimated at upward of two hundred millions. There is scarcely a corner of the earth which it has not visited. There is hardly a spot untrodden by christian feet. In the most civilized quarters of the world Christianity is incorporated with all the institutions of society. Literature and the arts, the whole course of human life and every variety of human pursuit show marks of the presence and agency of that religion which bears the name of Christ, and of the origin and character of which the books of the New Testament purport to be the authentic record.

Now even though an individual acknowledge no personal interest in Christianity, if he is aware of the simple facts to which I have just alluded, he cannot fail to take up the New Testament with intense and solemn interest. For as a matter of curiosity merely, there is hardly any thing that can take precedence of this remarkable book. It professes to describe the first appearance of a religion most venerable for its age, most extensive in its empire, and most striking and thorough in its influence; a religion which has survived powerful kingdoms, and whose history is blended with the history of civilized society. I say again then, that as a mere matter of intellectual inquiry and investigation, the New Testament has a high claim upon our attention.

But furthermore, a decent respect for our fellow men, for that large portion of mankind who build their faith upon the New Testament, demands that we should do our utmost to understand this book. It is a remarkable fact, that many of those who have been most distinguished for their opposition to Christianity have been confessedly ignorant of the contents of the New Testament. They have never read it, at least with patient and candid minds. And I believe it will always be found that those, who treat it with derision and love to throw ridicule upon Christianity, know very little about the christian records. Now such conduct is not merely unfair. It is narrow-minded, and although not so much yet as truly opposed to liberal thinking as the worst bigotry of which misguided Christians ever were guilty. For what is it to be liberal, charitable and humane, if it is not to respect the cherished faith and opinions of millions of our brethren. And who sins against common humanity, if he does not who ignorantly laughs at that which vast multitudes, among whom are many good, many great, many wise, hold sacred?

But a decent respect for our fellow men requires not merely that we should not treat their opinions with levity while we have no acquaintance with the sources from which these opinions are drawn, but also that we should not remain indifferent and ignorant about the prevalent religion, whatever it may be. If the documents and credentials of Christianity are at hand, and we neglect to use such means and opportunities of understanding them as are within our reach, then we not only neglect a religious obliga-

tion, but we are wanting in a becoming regard for our kind. Though we speak not against Christianity, still our ignorance is not to be justified. It is wrong under every aspect, but chiefly as it shows us deficient in proper respect for others. We do not come up to the spirit of a large and comprehensive charity while we treat with indifference the book upon which the faith of nations is built. Every man owes it to the christian community as a matter of decency to study the New Testament. The religion which its pages describe has been professed and defended by many of the wisest and best of men, men to be had in reverence and everlasting remembrance for their other services—for the various benefits they have conferred upon mankind.

But our own welfare as individuals offers the strongest reason of all why we should make every effort to understand the New Testament. This book unfolds the principles of no abstract science. The subject of which it treats is not remotely connected with human conduct and happiness. It bears directly and intimately upon our best interests, our dearest hopes. In youth, when we are charmed with the novelties of life and have had no experience of the inadequacy of human things to fill and sustain the mind, the accents of religious wisdom fall upon our ears unheeded, and we may not understand him who talks to us of the value of the Scriptures as springs of life, sources of satisfaction and hope. But we do not have to live long or to drink deeply of the cup of existence before we are compelled to confess that our minds are darkened, and our hearts

cast down, and our interest in life weakened by the numberless uncertainties and overhanging mysteries of our being. The objects for which we have toiled have eluded our grasp. Friends have betrayed us or gone from us. Our children have disappointed all our fond expectations. Disease racks our limbs or overpowers us with weakness; and the grave—the grave opens before us. We pry into its shadows. We listen for its silence to be broken. But no sound issues therefrom save the everlasting whispers of decay. We long to be assured that there is hope for man; that although all is darkness and vicissitude now, there is ultimate peace for us, rich, profound, and enduring forever! We have that dissatisfaction with the present, that yearning after something better, which the king of Israel expressed when he cried, ‘O that I had the wings of a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest.’ Jesus Christ professed to come with high authority to supply those wants of the mind, which the perishing objects of sense have never yet been able to appease. We now can have no intercourse with him save through those precious pages which record his life and his doctrine. Through the New Testament he yet speaketh. And this book in Christ’s stead offers to give peace to the mind. This is the high office it undertakes, to comfort man, to give him hope and joy. Surely then we cannot fail to be interested in its contents, in endeavoring to settle its pretensions.

The study of the christian Scriptures will not only give satisfaction to the mind; these sacred books offer protection and stability to the moral character.

I surely need not enlarge upon the moral dangers to which the individual is exposed. O how deadly are the perils that encompass an ungoverned heart! What shame and anguish may we bring upon ourselves through the delusions of our own thoughts. Let a man understand well what the Scriptures contain—let him understand religion as it appears in the New Testament, and he will be furnished with a strong moral safeguard. In communion with Jesus and the Apostles, he will be far removed from impure and selfish passions. The principles of moral goodness are so beautifully exemplified in the life of him whose history the New Testament gives us, that it is scarcely possible for those who study it not to be impressed and affected by them.

I mention as the last reason why the christian Scriptures should be carefully studied, the strength which will be most assuredly given by a diligent perusal of these invaluable writings to our faith in the grand facts and doctrines which they set forth. I venture to assert that the generality of Christians have no idea of the real and vivid faith in the truth of Christianity, which a proper acquaintance with the christian records will produce. So many internal evidences of truth disclose themselves—so much beauty and so much nature are revealed upon every page, that the conclusion is irresistible that the New Testament is substantially a correct account of real facts, and it is found to be altogether impossible to explain the existence and character of this book upon any other supposition than that of the reality of the events which it narrates. I am con-

fident that there is no better cure for infidelity than a candid and thorough perusal of the christian Scriptures, aided by all the lights which good sense and learning have thrown upon this volume. There are two kinds of evidence upon which our belief in the New Testament as containing a religion given immediately by God is founded,—external or historical, and internal evidence. Of these two the latter appears to me to be the more impressive and convincing. It consists of all those natural marks of truth which appear in the New Testament, and which nothing but a *true* story can have. It is composed of a thousand undesigned coincidences, which are utterly inconsistent with the supposition of falsehood. It may be traced in innumerable little circumstances, for the mention of which in the sacred narrative we cannot account except by admitting its truth. The nearer we approach to a perfect apprehension of the sense of the christian Scriptures, the more luminously will the countenance of divine truth be lifted up upon us. The character of Jesus Christ will stand out before us in all its unearthly symmetry, the better we become acquainted with the circumstances under which he lived and taught;—a character so immeasurably above the conceptions of the age to imagine, yet so natural that it is impossible to doubt its reality; a character, with which every idea of fraud and enthusiasm is utterly inconsistent, and from which we cannot disconnect the belief that the extraordinary evidences which Jesus professed to receive from God were actually vouchshafed to him.

I have now stated certain reasons for the diligent study of the christian Scriptures. These books are the records of a most remarkable religion; they are curious therefore. This is however saying the least for them. The religion whose introduction they describe is professed by immense multitudes, among whom are many great and good men; it is the dictate of decency therefore that we should know something of the nature of a religion so cherished. Again, the New Testament offers peace to the mind and purity to the heart, and thus meets the most sacred wants of our nature; our own highest interests therefore require us to know something about it. And finally it will confirm our faith beyond all conception in the truth of Christianity, to become acquainted with Christianity as it appears in the New Testament.

W. H. FURNESS.

---

DIFFERENT CHARACTER OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

[From the Eclectic Review.]

The London Eclectic Review for May of the present year contains an article on 'Family Expositors' of the Bible, a portion of which is quite valuable. As the work is but little read in this country, I shall be excused for the length of the extract. Some of the writer's expressions I do not entirely approve, but I have thought it unnecessary to notice them, except in one instance.

Judging from the common practice of expositors, it would seem to be quite forgotten, that under the name of the Bible is comprised a collection of writings differing as widely, in the character of the composition and in the difficulties it presents to the translator and commentator, as the Odes of Pindar, the Sanscrit Vedas, and the writings of Cicero or Tacitus. A commentary upon the Bible is a commentary upon writings in two or rather three languages, comprising very ancient historical annals, the lyric poetry of remote and widely separated eras, ethical writings, collections of maxims and proverbs, didactic poetry of the sublimest order, historical writings of a more recent date by various authors, argumentative treatises in an epistolary form, more familiar letters, and unfulfilled prophecies. Yet, on opening the pages of Henry, Scott, or any other commentator, we should be led to infer from the mode of exposition adopted, not merely that the Bible has in truth one common author as being given by inspiration of God, but that it is one homogeneous composition simply divided into different books. It seems as if a given quantity of remark was thought to be due to every portion of the text, or rather was to be extracted from it; which average quantity in some cases ingenuity is taxed to supply, while in passages of real difficulty the meagre annotation balks the inquirer. An exposition of all the books of Scripture on the usual plan may be compared to an atlas, in which the same scale is adhered to in laying down a map of Palestine and one of Persia. Surely nothing can be more unreasonable, than to

submit the various books of both the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures to the same mode of expository treatment.

' Let us take the New Testament,—a collection of tracts in the same dialect, although a dialect greatly modified by the circumstances of the respective writers. In this volume, we find writings which may be distributed into the following classes. I. The evangelical narratives of Matthew, Luke, and Mark. II. The biographical memoir of our Lord, supplied by the beloved disciple. III. The argumentative writings of St Paul, and the Epistle to the Hebrews. IV. The apostolic letters of St Paul to the churches he had planted, and those of the apostles Peter, John, James, and Jude. V. The shorter and more familiar letters of St Paul and St John. VI. The prophecies of St John. No one, we presume, will deny that a distinctive and very specific character attaches to the writings comprised in these several classes. Yet how little has this been attended to, much less has it been properly illustrated by our most popular expositors. May we rely upon the candor of our readers, while we attempt, very briefly and imperfectly, to indicate what we conceive to be the distinguishing features of the various books.

' The first three Gospels and the Book of Acts form our first class. In this class, however are comprised narratives of a very different character. That of Matthew is more a didactic than an historical writing; as a history, it is essentially incomplete. After giving our Lord's genealogy, and noticing

the circumstances of his birth, and the events which led to his being brought up at Nazareth though born in Judea,—this evangelist passes over all the intervening period, and commences his narrative with our Lord's public ministry, of which he was an eye and ear witness, and to which he almost entirely confines his relation. So little does he concern himself with historical facts, that he does not even mention our Lord's ascension; and in narrating occurrences he is more brief and concise than even St Mark. On the other hand, the sayings and discourses of our Lord are given by St Matthew more at large than by either of the other two evangelists under consideration. Immediately after relating the Saviour's induction to his ministry and the probationary temptation, the former proceeds to give, in what is usually called the Sermon on the Mount, a specimen of his teaching and doctrine who spake as never man spake. The others on the contrary commence their account of our Lord's ministry by recording the miracles he wrought. Upon these St Matthew lays apparently less stress, while he on the other hand continually adduces another species of evidence, that derived from prophecy, in a manner that may at first view seem far from direct or conclusive.

The key to these peculiarities is, that the object of this evangelist is to establish the Messiahship of our Lord and to combat the objections of the Jews. The miracles he wrought were notorious and admitted by his enemies; but we see in the narrative itself how the Jews disposed of this species of proof. ‘He casteth out devils by the prince of devils.’ On the other hand,

the genealogy of our Lord as establishing his being the heir of David,\* his being born of a virgin, his character as a teacher, and the entire correspondence of his conduct, circumstances and sufferings to the predictions of the Jewish Scriptures are points on which this evangelist insists on all occasions, because it was necessary for his immediate purpose. In some instances the *formula*, ‘that it might be fulfilled,’ cannot be connected with any distinct prediction, but is apparently intended to refer to Old Testament precedents, as a valid answer to objections founded on what might be regarded as ominous and unparalleled circumstances in our Lord’s history;—such as his being driven an infant exile into Egypt, the massacre of Bethlehem, and his becoming an inhabitant of a frontier town of Galilee notorious alike for its impure dialect and rudeness of manners. The first of these circumstances is sufficiently met † by the citation of the language of the Prophet Hosea, both as pointing to the striking coincidence between the history of the Jewish nation and the early life of our Lord, and as intimating that it was no new thing for those whom God regarded as his children to be ‘called out of Egypt.’ The second circumstance is in like manner shown ‡ to have a parallel in the Jewish history;—as if the evangelist had

---

\* St. Luke, as an historian, shows Jesus, the Son of Mary, to have been lineally descended from David. St. Matthew cites the accredited genealogy to prove that ‘he who is called Christ’ was, even as Joseph’s adopted and legal son, the heir of the House of David.

† Matt. ii, 15.

‡ Matt. ii, 17, 18.

said, ‘It was not the first time that the bereaved mothers of Benjamin had wept for their little ones.’ And the third circumstance, the greatest stumbling block of all, is shewn\* to have been in entire accordance with the general tenor of the predictions which foretold that Christ should be despised and rejected, to which his being mistaken for a Galilean or Nazarene by birth so much contributed, that it furnished the very emphasis of opprobrium.

‘St Luke’s object, as stated in the preface to his narrative, was to furnish an authentic and orderly relation of the facts believed among Christians; and he exhibits throughout both his Gospel and the Acts of the apostles, which forms the sequel, the character of the careful historian. He both begins earlier and carries on the history further than any other evangelist; and he not only mentions many remarkable facts which are not recorded by the others, but describes far more circumstantially several occurrences to which they slightly advert. Our Lord’s discourses are generally reported by Luke with little regard to time and place, or to the precise phraseology employed; at which we need feel no surprise, when we recollect that his object was merely to state historically the nature and substance of what our Lord taught, and that as he did not write for Jews, there could be no reason for his adhering to Jewish forms of expression and Jewish allusions. Several parables however not preserved by St Matthew, (the Prodigal Son, the Wise Steward, Dives and Lazarus,

---

\* Matt. ii, 23.

the Unjust Judge, and the Pharisee and Publican,) are ingrafted into his narrative by the inspired historian.

' St Mark's Gospel is a brief and rapid outline of the leading facts and characteristic features of our Lord's public ministry; drawn up apparently for the use of the Christian Church. It is neither like Matthew's an apology, nor like Luke's a regular history. Few of our Lord's discourses or parables are given; but occasionally this evangelist is more circumstantial in his relation of striking incidents, and throws in some interesting touches,—as in his account of the Syrophenician woman, of the young ruler, and of the fall of Peter; he is also more specific in naming several individuals referred to; and he mentions our Lord's ascension, which is not recorded by either Matthew or John.'

[The reviewer then 'proceeds to inquire, what is the sort of exposition proper to the class of writings under consideration.' As his remarks on this topic would not be profitable to readers in general I omit them.]

' The Gospel of St John we have classed by itself, as more a biographical memoir, supplementary to the evangelical narratives previously extant, than a strictly historical document. In this most delightful book of the four, which go under the common name of Gospels, we seem to have unfolded to us more of the private life, and, if we may use the expression, more of the heart of the Saviour as man, as well as

his ineffable glory as the only-begotten of the Father. In the record of Luke we have the public history of Jesus of Nazareth; in the pages of Matthew he to whom the Prophets bare witness appears evidently as the Messiah; John shows us the affectionate Master of his disciples, the friend of Lazarus, the ‘word made flesh,’—‘made like unto his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest,’—the Mediator. This, of all the four Gospels, is most independent of expository comment.\* It is the richest indeed in matter for devotional reflection and theological commentary, but it seems to repel the impertinence of frigid verbal criticism, and demands in him who undertakes the task of exposition a more than ordinary measure of the spirit of Christ.

‘Our third class comprises the Epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, and to the Hebrews. The first and last more especially, though in the epistolary form, must be regarded as dialectical treatises. Now in respect to these it appears to us, that comment ought to be in a great measure superseded by more efficient translation; since nothing can be more awkward and unsuitable than a treatise upon a treatise,—a sermonizing commentary upon an argumentative discourse, breaking perpetually the thread of remark and reasoning, or substituting it may be theological glosses for the simple and genuine scope of the text. Yet no part of the New Testament, as it appears in our version, stands so

---

\* I cannot but express my dissent from this remark, which seems to me singularly incorrect.

E. S. G.

absolutely in need of annotations to render the text intelligible to ordinary readers. We can scarcely wonder that the Epistle to the Romans should be judged unsuitable for family reading without the aid of exposition; but this arises far less, we must contend, from any intricacy or ambiguity in the apostle's statements or reasonings, than from the highly elliptical character of his phraseology, and the peculiar use of certain terms, which it is the proper business of a translator to make intelligible and perspicuous by equivalent rather than literal renderings. Were we however to fix upon any one of the books of the New Testament as more incompetently translated than the rest, it would be that very one which more than any other demanded a masterly hand,—we mean the Epistle to the Romans. Although the text is happily settled, the meaning of the text remains in many parts entirely unsettled, being exhibited in that indistinct, indefinite form by our translators, that affords the widest latitude to theological dispute and serves to keep alive an endless logomachy. Were St Paul to rise from the dead and to translate his own Epistle into English, we have no doubt that his version would produce not a little surprise, if it even escaped condemnation from biblical critics and commentators. In the present state of things the task of an expositor is a delicate one, for he must be to a considerable extent the actual interpreter of the text.

'We have classed the Epistles to the Corinthians with the shorter apostolic letters, which require little other comment than such as Paley has furnished

in his admirable '*Horæ Paulinae*,' or here and there some verbal corrections or explanations of the text as exhibited in the received version. There are however parts of the letters addressed to the church at Corinth, which certainly demand the especial aid of a competent expositor.—But it will not be necessary for our purpose to go over the other classes above enumerated. Our object has been to show, that the distinctive character of the several books has been too generally overlooked by commentators; that the various classes differ in style and matter, so widely as neither to require nor derive advantage from the same mode of treatment; that our harmonists and expositors have been in this respect greatly at fault; that the obscurity charged upon the volume of inspiration,—which has sometimes been made the pretence for withholding the most popular of writings from the people, and at other times an excuse for neglecting the perusal in the domestic circle,—is not inherent in the Scriptures, but greatly results from the imperfection of the philological process by which it has been rendered; that, in short, the cumbersome machinery of exposition, which hitherto has been the only remedy for the disadvantages of a literal version without note or comment, requires to be superseded by a more efficient *editing* of the inspired volume.—Most of our remarks will apply *a fortiori* to the various writings comprised in the Hebrew Scriptures, many of which are as much injured by superfluous commentary, as others are unintelligible without copious illustration.'

## REASONS FOR A NEW TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

IT is universally admitted that our common version of the Scriptures is not faultless. It is also conceded by all that this version is so far correct, that the essential principles of truth and duty may be drawn from it by any honest reader. That a better translation would be preferable, no one will pretend to deny; that a better one might be made, no person will hesitate to believe, who is acquainted with the progress of biblical criticism within the last half century or with some recent versions of particular books. Some minds however are held in a reverence for our present translation, to which it is not entitled by its merits, and which makes them unjustly suspicious of any attempt to introduce a change in the rendering even of a single passage. In the article taken from the Eclectic Review it will be seen that an authority, of whose disposition to favor dangerous opinions no one need be jealous, considers a new translation of some of the Epistles an important step towards a correct estimation of their contents by the English reader; so imperfectly did King James's translators express in their version the sense of the original. A remark previously made by the same writer contains an answer to the fears which some persons entertain lest the sanctity of the Scriptures should be invaded by one, whose sole object would be to give his fellow-christians a correct instead of a false notion of what apostles and holy men of God wrote of old.

'The [English] text is a version, which is as uninspired as the annotation. The matter of inspiration is the truth of God; and even admitting a plenary inspiration to have extended to the original expression of the truth conveyed, the interpretation of the original, whether by a literal rendering of the words or by an explanation of their meaning, can pretend to no such character. No translation, in fact, can claim to be referred to as an ultimate authority. One of the grossest errors of the church of Rome consists in her putting forth this claim on behalf of the Vulgate. All translations and all annotations on the sacred volume demand to be scrutinized with the most rigid severity, on account of the infinite importance of any material error in such representations of the substance of revealed truth. The appeal from the mistakes of either translators or commentators must equally lie to the Hebrew or Greek originals.'

The reasons for desiring a new translation of the Bible are so clear and strong, that the simple statement of them must satisfy one who is not secured against conviction by his prejudices or his fears. Among them are these.

1. At the time our common version was published the original text was not so well ascertained as it has been since, and the translators could not have used so correct a copy of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures as may now be obtained. Indeed, we know that they did rely on a text, the accuracy of which had not then been carefully examined, and is now universally denied. Since that time many more manuscripts have been discovered, more learning and judgment been exercised in their com-

parison, and a more faithful copy of the Scriptures is now in the hands of every scholar. Surely every Christian, who cannot read this precious volume in its original languages, must wish to have a translation of the words of the sacred writers, and not of the errors with which accident or design has defaced their compositions.

2. At the time when the common version was made the same means were not enjoyed for understanding an ancient writer as are now within the reach of every scholar. Not only were the laws of criticism then unsettled, but sound principles of interpretation were not adopted. Since that time interpretation has grown into a science, and its rules are as well defined and established as those of any other science or art. However learned the translators of the seventeenth century may have been, they were placed under a disadvantage to which the biblical student of the present day is not subject. They must have often erred through ignorance, and probably often fell into mistake through inattention to circumstances which a translator would now be inexcusable for neglecting. The study of languages has been facilitated, and light been thrown on the meaning of words by a knowledge of kindred tongues. Later travellers have collected information which illustrates many parts of the Bible. In a word, he who should now undertake to translate an ancient author with no other means of ascertaining his sense than were possessed in England two centuries ago,—if it were possible that one should place himself exactly in the situation of men at that pe-

riod,—would be accounted a stupid or a dishonest man.

3. The persons who translated the Bible by King James's direction were subject to prejudices and influences, which must have prevented a perfectly correct rendering of the original. However honest or faithful they may have esteemed themselves, they were men,—who had their partialities, their hopes and their fears. They had a delicate task to perform. They were almost compelled to look at something else than the plain meaning of the text; and as no one has pretended that they were free from human infirmities, it may reasonably be presumed that they felt the bias of the circumstances, mental and social, in which they were placed. That every translator is liable to be affected in a greater or less degree by similar causes, justifies us in believing that none are infallible.

4. The change which our language has undergone within the space of two hundred years, must render a translation of so old a date in some respects unsuitable for readers at the present day. In such a length of time expressions become obsolete, words acquire new senses and lose the old ones, different associations grow up around words and phrases and invest them with another character, modes of construction familiar to one period are supplanted by those of a subsequent age; and while these and other variations in the use if not in the structure of a language are going on, a book written in a former century retains its original garb, and appears as it were the monument of departed sounds and feel-

ings. It is surprising that occasion to verify these remarks so seldom arises in the perusal of our common Bibles, and we can explain the fact only by supposing that the general use of this version preserved the language from any great deviation from this standard. The examples of the phraseology and taste of a former age are however too numerous to escape the notice of any reader of ordinary discernment, who must regret that they remain as blemishes on the page of holy Scripture.

5. These circumstances would lead us to suppose previously to an examination of the work, that the version of the Scriptures in common use among us must inadequately express the sense of the original. An actual examination of its merits in respect to correctness or propriety would show that in innumerable instances it might be amended. Mistranslation of a very serious kind is comparatively rare, but faults which even one unacquainted with the ancient languages would discover appear on every page; and he who should institute a comparison between this version and the original text might make a long list of undoubted errors. The force of words is often misapprehended, the connexion often mistaken, rules of interpretation which it would now be considered shameful to disregard are neglected; in the rendering of particles especially, those connective words on which so much not only of the beauty but of the meaning of a writer depends, the translators evince great carelessness or ignorance; words frequently occur, which are now used in a widely different perhaps an opposite sense from that which

they bore in the time of King James; some passages of the present version are absolutely unintelligible; the punctuation is faulty, and this circumstance together with the division into chapters and verses, by which the argument or narrative is unjustly broken into fragments and the sense is both interrupted and darkened, impairs the value of every portion of the volume; in fine, obscurity, harshness, frequent misrepresentation of the meaning, and occasional violation of correct taste are charges which may be brought against this translation and can be fully substantiated.

That this version has great merits no one will deny. I wonder not that it is imperfect, but that it is so good. It is an occasion of surprise that these translators presented to the world a work so honorable to their diligence, learning and good taste. But they were uninspired men and labored under many disadvantages. The reasons that have now been given ought to convince any one that the common version is not worthy of implicit reliance. The fact, that by the increase of critical means and the enlargement of every province of knowledge young students are at the present time placed on more advantageous ground than was held by the ripe scholars of the seventeenth century, encourages me to undertake what under other circumstances might be highly presumptuous—to give a new translation of certain parts of the Bible.

## TRANSLATION AND EXPOSITION.

## MATTHEW III. 1—12.

*The Ministry of John the Baptist.*

1 At this period came John the Baptist proclaiming in the wilderness of Judea and saying, Re-  
2 form, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Now  
3 this was he spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, when  
he said, A voice of one crying in the wilderness,  
prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths  
4 straight. This John was clothed in a garment  
of camel's hair, and wore a leathern girdle ; and  
5 his food was locusts and wild honey. Then  
Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region along  
6 the Jordan went out to him, and confessing their  
7 sins were baptized by him in the Jordan. But  
when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees  
coming to his baptism, he said to them, Ye broods  
of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the  
8 approaching vengeance ? Bring ye forth the proper  
9 fruits of reformation, and do not think of saying  
to yourselves, we have Abraham for our father ;  
for I say to you, that God can raise up chil-  
10 dren to Abraham from these stones. Even now  
the axe is lying at the root of the trees ; every  
tree which does not yield good fruit must be cut  
11 down and cast into the fire. I baptize you

indeed with water, for reformation ; but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, I am not worthy to carry his shoes ; he will baptize <sup>12</sup> you with the holy spirit and with fire. His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly clear his floor, and will collect his wheat into the granary, but will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

The parallel passages may be found in Mark i. 1—8, and Luke iii. 1—14; also John i. 15—28. The narratives of the evangelists should be compared, as a more full account of John's ministry may be gathered from the four than from any one of them. Luke, particularly, makes us acquainted with his style of preaching.

Verse 1. '*At this period*,'—literally 'in those days,'—does not mean immediately after the events narrated in the previous chapter, for it appears from Luke iii. 23, as well as from Luke iii. 1, and from the very nature of the circumstances that our Lord had passed the season of youth, when John began his ministry ; 'about this time,' i. e., subsequently to the events just mentioned, but while Jesus was living at Nazareth.

'*John the Baptist*.' For an account of the family and birth of John, see Luke i. 5—25 and 57—80. He received the title of the Baptist, because it was his particular office to baptize.

'*Proclaiming*,'—making such a proclamation as is recorded in the next verse.

'*Wilderness*.' The words wilderness and desert (Luke i.

80,) do not bear in common use the sense which should be given them in reading the Scriptures. The ‘wilderness’ was not an uninhabitable nor an uninhabited region, but one *comparatively* barren and vacant of population. In Joshua xv. 61, 62, we find the names of ‘six cities with their villages,’ ‘in the wilderness.’

V. 2. ‘*Reform.*’ The word ‘repent’ does not express the force of the original; which signifies a change of character, a permanent alteration of the dispositions and habits. The same remark may be made on the noun of the same meaning in verse 8.

‘*The kingdom of heaven,*’—the reign of the Messiah, which the Jews were then expecting; or as we Christians should say, the religion of Jesus Christ, which came from God to reign over the hearts and lives of men, and to make them partakers of the joys of heaven here and hereafter.

V. 3. Isaiah xl. 3. The passage contains an allusion to the custom of monarchs, who on a march or journey sent men to clear away obstructions, level eminences, fill up vallies, and remove all impediments to an easy and *straight* progress through the country.—The Jews were called upon to prepare the way for the Messiah, or the religion which God would send them through his Son, by reformation that would remove the obstructions to the gospel, and give the truth ‘free course’ through their hearts and their land.

V. 4. John’s dress was that of many in the poorer class of his countrymen. His cloak—the upper *garment* of the Jew—was made of the coarse hair of the camel, which was woven into a fabric of plain stuff. The *girdle* was an important part of the oriental dress, as it confined the flowing cloak or robe, when its loose folds would have been inconvenient for the wearer; it also served other purposes, as that of a purse. John wore a dress like that of the old prophets. In Zachariah xiii. 4, the ‘wearing of a rough

garment to deceive,' is mentioned as one of the arts of the false prophets. Elijah, under whose name John was predicted, is described in 2 Kings i. 8, as 'a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather.'

The *food* of the Baptist was also that of his poorer countrymen. *Locust* were esteemed palatable, and were commonly eaten in the East. The *wild honey* was either that made by wild bees in the clefts of rocks and trees, or it was a substance which flowed from certain trees and became hard on exposure to the air.

V. 5. We have here an example of the manner in which a universal proposition is often presented in Scripture, when it must be qualified by the circumstances in connexion. The evangelist did not mean that the whole city and country were gathered around John—that literally '*all*,' men, women and children, went to be baptized; but immense throngs; as we say when we wish to express a great number, '*every body* was there.' Language was used by the writers of the New Testament as it is used in common life, and not with philosophical accuracy.

'*The Jordan*,' was the only stream in Palestine to which we should give the name of a river. It flowed from north to south, along the whole extent of the country from its northern mountains to the Dead Sea. Between the Jordan and the Mediterranean lay the three provinces of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea.

V. 6. *Baptism* was common among the Jews before the time of John, on occasion of receiving a convert from heathenism to the Mosaic faith. It signified the change of belief and practice which must attend or follow the adoption of a new religion.

V. 7. '*The Pharisees*' and '*the Sadducees*' were the two principal sects among the Jews at this time. The Pharisees were more numerous and had more influence among the people than the Sadducees; they were distin-

guished by the reverence in which they held the traditions received, as they said, from the fathers, to which they allowed an equal authority with the written law ; they were also notorious for their scrupulous observance of forms and their adherence to the letter to the neglect of the spirit of the Mosaic institutions. They were generally, (though not universally,) bad men, selfish, malignant and hypocritical. The Sadducees rejected the traditions, regarded the Pentateuch with more respect than the other books of the Jewish Scriptures, and had no belief in man's immortality or future retribution. They mostly belonged to the wealthy part of the nation.

The Pharisees and Sadducees probably sought John's baptism from a hope that he was either the Messiah, for whom they were then anxiously looking, or his forerunner. Their object was to secure his favor, that they might obtain places of honor in his kingdom. John detecting their motive, addressed them in the language of just though severe rebuke.

'*Ye broods of vipers.*' The expression is descriptive of these two classes of men. They were subtle and malicious ; like him whom Paul (Acts xiii. 10,) declared to be 'full of all subtlety and mischief.' Our Lord more than once applied the terms used by John to the Pharisees, Matt. xii. 34, and xxiii. 33.

'*The approaching vengeance,*'—the destruction which is about to fall on your city and nation, the just punishment of your crimes, which can be averted only by reformation.

V. 8. '*The proper fruits of reformation;*'—show by a consistent character and conduct that you have really forsaken your sinful practices ; let your deeds be worthy of a new life. There is an allusion to their hypocrisy.

V. 9. '*Do not think of saying.*' This form of expression, used by us in conversation, gives better than any other the force of the original, in which is indicated the vain

self-confidence that distinguished the Jews, who were extravagantly proud of their descent from the patriarchs, and relied on this circumstance as a ground of acceptance with God. Expressions like that which John ascribes to the Pharisees and Sadducees were common among the Jews.

‘*God can raise up,’ &c.* By this strong language John intimated that the fulfilment of God’s purposes and promises did not depend on the Jews. He could find other instruments and other servants. There may have been an allusion to the Gentiles, whom the Jews regarded with contempt.

V. 10. ‘*Even now the axe is lying?*’ The figure is borrowed from the woodcutter, who having selected the tree which he shall cut down lays his axe near it while he is preparing himself for his work. The calamities which were soon to overwhelm the Jewish people are intended. The corrupt and hypocritical would receive the treatment which they merited. As the barren tree is consumed, so would the Jewish state be utterly destroyed.

V. 11. ‘*For reformation;*’—as a sign and pledge of a new character.

‘*He who is coming after me,*’—the Messiah, who is now on the point of appearance. John intimates very clearly that he is not the Messiah.

‘*I am not worthy to carry his shoes*’—probably a familiar expression, signifying great inferiority.

‘*The holy spirit*’—the spiritual influences of Christianity, including its divine truths, its holy character, and the miraculous gifts which were enjoyed by its first disciples.

‘*Fire.*’ Fire is used in Scripture as an emblem of punishment, (as in Jer. xvii. 4, 27.) The coming of the Messiah would be signalized by the greatest blessings and the greatest sufferings; with one or other of which the Jews according to their respective characters would be visited;

those who believed and obeyed the gospel experiencing its supernatural effects, while they by whom it was rejected would be involved in the ruin of their country.

V. 12. The sentiment contained in the last clause of v. 11, is repeated under a figure borrowed from the labors of the husbandman. The threshing *floor* was an open space of ground beaten hard and smooth for the purpose. The *fan* was a large wooden instrument, in which the grain and chaff were exposed together to the action of the wind by which they were separated; and while the one was consumed as worthless, the other was carefully preserved in the granary. A like distinction would be made between the believing and the unbelieving Jews, the latter being left to the awful desolation that would come upon their land, from which the former would be saved. *Unquenchable fire* burns as long as it has any thing to consume; in like manner the miseries that awaited the Jewish people would not cease till they had accomplished the total overthrow of their city and nation.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. The character of John the Baptist may be profitably studied and imitated. His honesty and moral courage were finely contrasted with his humility. A man of simple habits, plain address, and fearless integrity, he was suited for the office to which in the divine Providence he was called—a preacher of reformation in an age of great wickedness, and among a people in whom personal depravity was inflamed by national pride. The notices of him in the gospels are few and brief, but they are sufficient to show us that he was faithful in reforming sin, and is entitled to our regard not only as the forerunner

of our Lord but as an example of strict and firm virtue. He was indeed a remarkable man, independently of the interest thrown around his name by the prophecies of which he was the subject, and the relation which he bore to the Messiah. Josephus, the Jewish historian, mentions him in terms of respect as one, ‘who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism.’ It is observable that John wrought no miracles, (see John x. 41.) He probably had but an imperfect conception of the nature of that religion, whose founder it was the special purpose of his mission to announce. He was the connecting link between the old and new dispensations. He was willing that the lustre of his name should be lost in the fulness of that light which ‘was coming,’ and instead of endeavoring to fix attention upon himself, directed the people who attended his baptism to the Messiah, to whom it was an honor of which even he was unworthy to render the most menial services. What an example is this to Christians, who should prefer their Master’s glory to their own. The Saviour’s testimony concerning his forerunner may be found in Matt. xi. 7-15 or Luke vii. 24-29. The circumstances of his death are recorded in Matt. xiv. 3-12 and in Mark vi. 17-29.

2. The style and subjects of John’s preaching are as remarkable as his character. Luke has given a more particular account than Matthew. His universal theme was reformation, but to each class of his hearers—to the Pharisees, the publicans, the

soldiers and the common people—he made his call intelligible and pertinent by rebuking their various sins, and requiring the appropriate change in their dispositions and conduct. His teaching was plain, direct and practical. Such should be the character of religious teaching in every age and in every country. Reformation,—it is the great theme for a sinful world; reformation, which consists not in tears nor professions, but in ceasing to do evil and learning to do well.

3. How vain are all hopes of the divine favor, that rest on earthly distinctions. Christians do not boast of their descent from Abraham, but a reliance on any other ground of worldly superiority is as foolish. The only difference between the high and the low, the rich and the poor, in the eye of Heaven, is that they who are distinguished by station or possession have a greater responsibility. With God they alone are accepted, who exhibit the genuine fruits of faith and obedience, of reformation and holiness.

4. It is equally true and important in respect to us as to the Jews that Christianity is a religion of discrimination. It distinguishes characters, and separates the good from the bad by determining to which class each of those whom it addresses belongs. It does not now involve a nation or an individual in immediate retribution, but it will hereafter be recognised as ‘a judge and a divider.’ What a seriousness should it awaken in our minds, to what care and activity should it incite us, to consider that our condition will depend on our use or neglect of the gospel of our Master.

MATT. III. 13—17.

*The Baptism of Jesus.*

<sup>13</sup> Then came Jesus from Galilee to John at the  
<sup>14</sup> Jordan, that he might be baptized by him. But  
John opposed his purpose, saying, ‘I need to be  
<sup>15</sup> baptized by thee, and thou comest to me!’ But  
Jesus replied, ‘Permit it now; for thus it becomes  
us to do whatever is right.’ Then he consented.  
<sup>16</sup> And immediately upon his baptism Jesus came up  
from the water; and lo! the heavens were opened  
to his view, and he saw the spirit of God descending  
<sup>17</sup> like a dove and coming upon him; and lo! a  
voice from the heavens, uttering, ‘This is my be-  
loved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’

## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

The parallel passages are Mark i. 9—11 and Luke iii. 21, 22. See also John i. 29—34.

V. 13. Jesus had been living with his parents in Nazareth; (see Luke ii. 51.)—John was at this time at Bethabara, on the eastern side of the Jordan, a few miles north of its entrance into the Dead Sea. He did not remain here constantly, for it appears (from John iii. 23) that he was afterwards at Enon, many miles farther north, on the western bank of the river.

V. 14. John, probably being acquainted with the singular innocence of Jesus’ life, as there was doubtless some intercourse between their families, (see Luke i. 36 and 40,) and perhaps having some personal knowledge of Jesus and his blameless character, declined administering the baptism

*of reformation* to one so pure. John may also have been led by the peculiar circumstances of the infancy and childhood of Jesus as well as by his wonderful purity to suppose that he was the Messiah, though he was not assured of it till after his baptism. (See John i. 31.)

V. 15. See Practical Remarks below, No. 1.

V. 16. I should prefer the word *sky* to *heavens*, if the latter had not become familiar to readers of the passage.

'*He saw*,' i. e., Jesus saw the supernatural appearance, which was also observed by the Baptist, (see John i. 32.)

'*Like a dove*,'—after the manner of a dove, with a gentle, easy descent. Luke's expression—'in a bodily shape,' (iii. 22.)—does not necessarily signify that the miraculous symbol of the divine spirit was in the form of a bird, but that it had a distinct, substantial appearance.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Our Lord's baptism was important for three purposes, which made it 'right' that John should perform and Jesus be the subject of the act. 1. That Jesus might give his sanction by his own example to the office borne by the Baptist. 2. That an opportunity might be afforded for the miraculous designation of Jesus as the Messiah to John. 3. That for the sake of his disciples in that and all subsequent ages, as also for his own support, this miraculous attestation of the Father to the mission and character of his Son might be given.

2. By them who believe that God has thus spoken to and of our Master, he should be regarded with a reverence and an affection only inferior to the sentiments which we cherish towards the supreme Father. The beloved Son of God should be loved, imitated, and obeyed by us.

## TRANSLATION AND EXPOSITION.

MATTHEW IV. 1—11.

*The Temptation of Jesus Christ.*

1 After this Jesus was led by the spirit into the  
2 wilderness, to be tempted by the devil. And  
3 having fasted forty days and forty nights, he was  
then hungry. And the tempter came to him, and  
said, If thou art the Son of God, command these  
4 stones to become loaves of bread. But he replied,  
It is written, ‘man shall not live on bread alone,  
but on every word proceeding from the mouth of  
5 God.’ Then the devil takes him to the holy city  
and places him upon the turret of the temple, and  
says to him, If thou art the Son of God, throw  
thyself down ; for it is written, ‘he will give his  
angels a command concerning thee, and they shall  
bear thee up in their hands, lest thou shouldst strike  
7 thy foot against a stone.’ Jesus said to him, It is  
also written, ‘thou shalt not try the Lord thy God.’  
8 Again the devil takes him to a very high mountain  
and shows him all the kingdoms of the world and  
9 their glory, and says to him, ‘All these I will give  
thee if thou wilt prostrate thyself in worship before  
10 me. Then Jesus says to him, Get thee behind me,  
Satan ; for it is written, ‘thou shalt worship the  
Lord thy God, and shalt pay religious service to  
11 him alone.’ Then the devil leaves him ; and lo !  
angels came and ministered unto him.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

The parallel passages occur in Mark i. 12, 13 and Luke iv. 1—13. John makes no mention of the temptation. Mark does not enter into particulars. Luke's narrative corresponds almost verbally with Matthew's, with the single exception that the order of the scenes is different, Luke placing the view of 'the kingdoms of the world' before the suggestion respecting the temple.

V. 1. '*After this*,' i. e. after the baptism of Jesus and the descent of the spirit.

'*The wilderness.*' As Mark says that 'he was with the wild beasts,' this must have been a wild and desolate place. It has been supposed that it was a part of the wilderness of Sinai; but it is more probable that it was the Desert of Jericho, which lay between Jericho and Jerusalem and not far from the place where John was baptizing.

V. 2. Moses, the lawgiver of the Israelites, when receiving the commandments of Jehovah on Mount Sinai, fasted 'forty days and forty nights'; (see Exod. xxxiv. 28 and Deut. ix. 18.) Elijah also, the great prophet of the old dispensation, when escaping from the fury of Jezebel, seems to have kept a fast of equal length; (see 1 Kings xix. 8.)

V. 4. Deuteronomy viii. 3. I have given the words their literal meaning, in which they correspond to the passage in the Old Testament. In both places however *thing* would be as proper as '*word.*' The meaning clearly is, man shall live \* \* \* on every ordinance or appointment of God.

V. 5. Jerusalem was called by the Jews '*the holy city*'; as again by Matthew, chap. xxvii. 53.

The meaning of the word translated *pinnacle* in the common version is not clearly ascertained. '*Turret*' approaches most nearly to what I suppose was meant. Josephus, in describing Herod's temple, which was the one to which allusion is here made, says that 'the whole structure, as was

also the structure of the royal cloister, was on each side much lower, but the middle was much higher.' The temple was surrounded by porches, to one of which it is most probable that the text points. Josephus remarks upon one of them, 'this cloister deserves to be mentioned better than any other under the sun; for while the valley was very deep, this farther vastly higher elevation of the cloister stood upon that height, insomuch that if any one looked down from the top of the battlements, he would be giddy.'

V. 6. Psalm xc. 11, 12.

V. 7. Deuteronomy vi. 16. The proper meaning is not conveyed by the English word, *tempt*. It is, thou shalt not put the character of God to a foolish trial—thou shalt not make a useless and presumptuous demand on his power or goodness, nor ask a proof of his favor which would only gratify thy pride. See the word used in this sense in Isaiah vii. 12.

V. 8. Time would be wasted in attempting to ascertain what particular '*mountain*', if any, is here intended.

V. 10. '*Get thee behind me*' is the rendering of the correct text of the original, and may have been a common mode of expressing disapprobation and reproof. Our Lord used the same words in rebuking Peter, (Matt. xvi. 23.)—The quotation is from Deuteronomy vi. 13.

V. 11. Luke says that 'the devil departed from him for a season,' intimating that Jesus was subsequently visited by temptations.

'*Ministered to him*,'—supplied his wants.

1. See the next article.
2. We are clearly taught by this narrative, that temptation is not a proof, and need not be an occa-

sion of sin. Our Lord was sorely tried by evil suggestions, yet 'knew not sin.' The Christian then should not distress himself with vain fears, because unwelcome thoughts enter his mind. 'The disciple is not above his Master; but every one that is perfect shall be as his Master.' Such trials are the tests of purity, not the signs of wickedness. It is not the entrance of evil thoughts that proves guilt, but their residence in the mind which harbors them.

3. We are also instructed how to resist and disappoint temptation; with 'the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God;' 'having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and above all taking the shield of faith.' Our Lord remembered and believed the commandments of God. He trusted the divine love. May not we have the same confidence? Ought not we to have a like ready acquaintance with the truths of religion? The whole Bible is open to us as an armory, from which we may draw the weapons for our spiritual warfare. A prompt and confident, but not vain glorious, use of them will save us harmless from all the assaults of temptation.

4. Our admiration of Jesus Christ must be increased with every hour which we spend in the study of this part of his history. The more we examine the circumstances and consider the nature of the trials to which he was subjected, the more clearly shall we perceive the perfection of his character; the more grateful must we be for his example, and the more anxious to keep it always before us.

## THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

The 'temptation of our Lord' has been differently explained by learned and pious men. The varieties of interpretation may be reduced to three classes, as it is understood to have been a real temptation, or a symbolical vision, or a parable. Among those who believe that the narrative describes trials actually endured by Christ, there is a difference of opinion respecting the source of the temptation. We may therefore notice five explanations of this scene, under one or other of which all that has been said on the subject may be included. I shall begin with that which seems to me least entitled to regard, and proceed in order of probability to that which I adopt.

The first then will be that, which supposes our Lord to have merely spoken a parable for the instruction of his disciples, in which he represented himself in circumstances similar to those in which they might be placed in their subsequent ministry. It is a sufficient objection to this view, that there is nothing in the narrative to support it, and almost every thing against it. The scene is not recorded by the evangelists as if it belonged to the *discourses* of Jesus, but as part of the events of his life; and no intimation is given that would lead his apostles to suppose that he was conveying to them instruction under the garb of fable.

Another mode of explaining the temptation has represented the whole as a vision;—as a dream or an ecstasy, by which Jesus was himself instructed concerning the trials of his future ministry and the

means of vanquishing them. To this the same reply may be made—that the narrative does not suggest, even if it can be thought to allow such an interpretation. On first reading it the impression is received of an actual trial of faith and character, and this impression instead of being weakened will generally be confirmed by frequent perusal. But whatever passed in a trance or symbolical vision would constitute no trial ; there would be no real temptation.

We come now to those explanations, which coincide in the principle that this is the account of a real temptation. Of these the first that occurs is the common belief, that an interview took place between Jesus Christ and the prince of evil spirits, who is styled in popular language the Devil and Satan. Upon the question concerning the existence of such a being we need here spend no time, excepting to observe that while this question — critical far more than theological in its nature — is open, the correctness of the usual explanation of the passage now before us is so far rendered doubtful. But apart from this question, there are difficulties in the way of supposing that Christ was tempted in a personal conference with the devil. Upon this explanation Satan must have been visibly present, and have been known by Jesus. Now a knowledge of the person of the tempter would have destroyed the force of the temptation. The devil would by discovering himself have defeated his own object. Besides, this literal construction of the language gives the devil a power over our Lord, which is not ascribed to him in respect to any good man — the power of removing him from place to place.—If any one insist that terms

are used which describe a real being, I would say, with Cappe, that 'the language of the history here is just such as occurs everywhere, both in the Old and the New Testament; in which evil or whatever tends to evil, though it be the natural result of the external circumstances and mental feelings and impressions of the person who is the subject of the narrative, is ascribed to the influence or suggestion of another evil being or to the instigator of evil.'

An explanation, which will be new to many readers has been defended by some late German commentators with considerable ingenuity. They suppose the tempter to have been a Jew, probably a member of the Sanhedrim, who was deputed to ascertain in a private interview with Jesus the extent of his powers and the dispositions which he cherished. They imagine that attention has been drawn to him by the circumstances of his baptism, and 'the rulers' were anxious to learn how far he might be expected to countenance or to oppose their authority. The individual whom they sent is thought to have tempted Christ by offering the suggestions noticed by the evangelists. The objections to this view are strong. Nothing in this or in any other part of the gospels favors the idea of such a purpose on the part of the Jewish rulers; many circumstances render it improbable; and the temptation, coming from such a source, would not have constituted a severe trial of our Lord's faith or integrity.

The explanation which I shall now give appears to me far more satisfactory than any other. One or two previous remarks will be in place.

I believe that the evangelists have described a *real* temptation. The whole strain of the narrative seems to me to indicate this; the circumstances of the occasion make it probable; and the writer to the Hebrews encourages the belief, when in two places he speaks of Jesus 'tempted like as we are:' (Heb. iv. 1, and ii. 18.)

The apostles must have received their knowledge of the circumstances from their Master. As none of them were present, he must subsequently and of his own will have communicated to them the facts.

If our Lord informed his disciples of this *secret* part of his history, it must have been for some good purpose, and doubtless with some other view than merely to increase their admiration of himself. It is very probable that his object was to instruct them concerning the trials and duties of their ministry.

It is not necessary to suppose that we are made acquainted with *all* the trials, to which Christ was subjected at this time. The three which are recorded might have been the principal, and may be taken as examples of classes rather than as the whole amount of suggestions to which he was exposed.

Let us now look at the circumstances. Jesus, having been baptized and miraculously designated as the Messiah, was prompted by an impulse in which he recognised an intimation of the divine will, to withdraw himself wholly from society, and by a season of meditation and communion with God in the heart of the desert to prepare himself for the work to which he had been called, and on which the fortunes of the human race were suspended. It was a

work that would require faith, purity, benevolence and patience to a degree never yet seen on earth. What so proper as that he should previously fill and strengthen his mind with holy thoughts in hours and days of lonely musing ? Here also his Father would communicate to him more clear and ample views than he had yet received of the mission he was about to undertake, and of the truth which it would be his office not only to deliver to men, but to seal with his blood. He therefore sought the recesses of the wilderness. For nearly six weeks he was alone with God ; so absorbed in spiritual contemplation that he ate nothing, except as he resorted to the scanty means of sustenance which the desert supplied.\* At the end of this time the physical system demanded nourishment. Exhausted by this long fast and by the intense mental exercise in which he had been engaged, his mind was open to impressions of evil. He knew that he was entrusted with miraculous powers, that he was the Messiah of whom prophets had sung, and for whom expectation was then looking with eager gaze. What were the natural suggestions of the hour ? They can be expressed in a single line ; — an abuse of his gifts to purposes of selfish gratification.

The first use which he was thus tempted to make of his miraculous power, was the creation of an im-

---

\* Luke's expression that 'he did eat nothing' need not be construed to the letter, any more than our Lord's declaration concerning John that he came 'neither eating nor drinking ;' while it is recorded of him that 'his food was locusts and wild honey.'

mediate supply of his wants. He was pressed by hunger ; the desert mocked his appetite with its hard and barren rocks. But by a word he could convert these into bread. How easy a means of relief, how natural a suggestion. Before however the thought had rested long enough in his mind to disturb its purity, he perceived that such an act would betray a distrust of the divine Providence, and a disposition to make his supernatural endowments the means of personal benefit. They were not given him for this end, and he remembered a text of scripture which inculcates reliance on the Divine Being. The temptation was disarmed of its power.

It returned in a different shape. He was going to revisit the abodes of men, and to present himself before them as a teacher sent from God, as the promised Deliverer. But he would contradict their pre-conceived notions, and while he moved among them in plain apparel and with an humble train of followers, they would doubt the justice of his claims. Let him exhibit himself in some situation where he must captivate their wonder, let him expose himself to some danger from which he could be preserved only by the special interposition of Heaven, let him ascend to the roof of the temple-courts and thence in sight of the people throw himself headlong, when such an act would be certain death to one whose pretensions to the Messiahship were false ; and they would hail him as the Son of God. And was he not encouraged to provoke such a manifestation of the divine favor by the language of the Psalmist, which then recurred to his mind ? Such were the thoughts which arose,

but only to be expelled by other and better thoughts. What would this be but a foolish and sinful demand upon the divine aid? the display of a vain glorious confidence, or a disposition to avoid the difficulties that lay in prospect before him? what but a violation of the command, not to put the promise or the power of Jehovah to the test on a needless occasion? The temptation left him as it found him, humble, pious and blameless.

Suggestions of another sort now assailed his integrity. He was the Messiah, the well beloved of God, in prophetic description the King of Israel, the Mighty One. Did not a path of triumph and glory lie before him? Let him assume the royal state, put himself at the head of Jewish soldiers who would flock to his standard, break the yoke of national subjection, and go forth to humble the Roman name. Armed with divine power and clothed in the authority of his office, must he not be successful? Cities and nations would yield to his sway, and 'the kingdoms of the world and their glory' would be his. The vision played but an instant before his mental eye. He discovered at once the nature of the imagination. It would be treason to the purposes for which he had been chosen, opposition to the will of God, idolatry to self. The words of the divine law were remembered. Ambition was foiled, as appetite and vanity had been before. Jesus was proved to be spotless.

Such was in substance the temptation of Christ at this period. We have an epitome, as it were, of the whole in a few examples, each of which repre-

sents a class of temptations to which he would be most liable during his ministry, and which might be repelled by the exercise of the sentiments which are here presented to our notice. He banished them before they had stained his purity, and heavenly peace and strength visited his soul, while his Father gave him a new proof of his love by sending immediate relief to his necessities.

I have said that our Lord described this scene to his disciples for their instruction, that they might know how to defend themselves against similar assaults upon their virtue. They would be tempted to abuse their supernatural endowments to purposes of selfish gratification. They would experience want and distress, from which they might be prompted to seek relief by an exercise of miraculous power. It might often occur to them that by a signal display of their gifts they could secure the public regard and favor, and thus strike out an easier path to success than Providence was allotting them. They might be moved to seek personal aggrandizement, and pervert the trust committed to them by Heaven into the instrument of ambition. These would be the severest *private* trials of their ministry,—want of faith, loss of patience, thirst for glory. Their Master kindly warned them of their danger and of the proper methods of anticipating and meeting it. How kindly! with what compassion, with what delicacy! — by setting before them his own example, by letting them look into his own secret history, by informing them concerning his own trials.

## WHY IS THE BIBLE SO LITTLE UNDERSTOOD ?

In answering this question, I shall briefly enumerate the principal causes of the obscurity which envelopes the sacred volume. The bare mention of these causes will, it is believed, suggest the needed remedies.

1. In the first place, the Bible is an *old* book, in some parts a very old book ; the book of Job, and the books of Moses are older than any other written documents extant. They are the only fragments which have floated down to us from the wreck of primeval letters. They were written at least three thousand years ago ; and from that day to this, the finger of time has been busily at work, obliterating the record, and clouding the meaning which the words were designed to convey. Just consider for a moment the mode in which they have been transmitted to us — by successive transcriptions of the orginal upon frail and perishable materials. Now, however carefully this may have been done, it was impossible but that in the course of time some omissions, additions or variations in the words employed should take place ; a perpetual miracle could alone have prevented it. And suppose such a miracle had been wrought, another miracle would have been needed to check that constant change which is taking place in the languages of men. In the course of a few hundred years so many terms become obsolete, and so many new ones are introduced, that a language is almost unintelligible even to one to whom it is his mother-tongue. What must we expect when fifteen or thirty centuries have elapsed ?

2. But the Bible is not only an old book — it is likewise a *foreign* book; foreign in its topics, its thoughts, conceptions, feelings and expressions. The subjects on which it treats were novel at the time when its several portions were written; its doctrines were quite different from the previous notions of men. Of course new words must be introduced, or what is a still greater source of ambiguity, old words must be used in new senses. To us the Bible is a *translated* book, and must necessarily in many places be a mistranslated book; and therefore in those places must be misunderstood. There are many obstacles in the way of comprehending foreign writings of any sort. The aid of much and varied information must be called in; the memory and the judgement must be kept in constant and vigorous exercise. In studying the Bible a great degree of care and attention is demanded. Much of the thought and language is peculiar. You meet with new opinions, sentiments and usages. You observe frequent allusions to strange customs and institutions. Much of the language is the language of strong feeling and an excited imagination; — there is much of oriental hyperbole, of bold and exaggerated description. There is a good deal of impassioned poetry and eloquence scattered through the volume. Many of the statements were occasional and local — had a particular and limited application; and some of the precepts were fitted only for a certain posture of affairs, and binding only upon certain individuals, or societies of men. All these circumstances must be known, and it requires a diligent and practised eye to discern them.

If they are not attended to, we need not say that confusion and obscurity will envelope many of our views of biblical truth.

3. In the third place the Bible is a *miscellaneous* book. As has been well observed by Edmund Burke, 'it is no one summary of doctrines, regularly digested, in which a man could not mistake his way. It is a most venerable, but most multifarious collection of the records of the divine economy ; a collection of an infinite variety of cosmogony, theology, history, prophecy, psalmody, morality, dialogue, allegory, legislation, ethics, carried through different books, by different authors, at different ages, for different ends and purposes. It is necessary to sort out what is intended for example, what only as a narrative ; what is to be understood literally, what figuratively ; where one precept is to be controlled and modified by another ; what is used directly, and what only as an occasional or personal argument ; what is temporary, and what is of perpetual obligation ; what appropriated to one set or one state of men, and what the general duty of Christians.'

And yet how few there are who ever think of these things when they are reading the Bible. To most men it appears a simple, homogeneous composition. They have never reflected that its parts were produced successively, and that it has acquired its present size by gradual accretion. They never take into consideration the characters of the writers, or the objects they may have had in view. The interval of a thousand years and the entire diversity of topics do not prevent them from connecting passages from

the two covenants, if they have but a single word in common by which the connexion can be made. This mode of using the Scriptures has been fostered by the minute portions into which they have been divided. Each individual verse is supposed to contain a complete sentence, and to possess of itself a distinct and independent meaning. The course of reasoning, the tenor of the narrative are disregarded ; the connexion of the discourse is thought to be of little importance ;— and men suppose that they understand what they read in this irregular and unnatural method. Yet they would scoff at the suggestion of reading any other book in this way. Tell them to take a chapter of some popular history, and divide and subdivide it into such fragments as those of which the Bible at present consists, and regard each fragment as a separate declaration, and they will tell you that such a process would render the discourse unintelligible. The Bible is the only book with which such license is permitted.

4. Again, the Bible is a book which has been much commented upon, and disputed about, and its meaning has in both these ways been rendered obscure. The mind is bewildered by the variety of expositions and the multiplicity of conjectures. Amidst all the possible and impossible meanings which have been assigned to a word, a phrase or a sentence, it often finds itself at a loss to fix upon the true one. He is an unpractised commentator who cannot by his explanations darken the plainest passage, and in whose hands the smallest verse will not grow like the grain of mustard-seed, and furnish shelter to the

most crude and fanciful theories. The Scriptures have been consulted by persons of the most opposite principles and sentiments, and like the old oracles have been compelled to utter responses in accordance with the known opinions and wishes of the interrogator. Men have gone to them not to inquire what they teach, but to search for passages to support the opinions which they have previously derived from other sources. The same text is claimed by conflicting denominations, and a verse which can have but one meaning is accommodated perhaps with a dozen, and some of these too in direct opposition to each other.

5. The last reason which I shall mention why the Scriptures are not better understood, is that they are read superficially, without much thought or reflection. The reader takes his Bible, and leaves it to chance to determine what portion he shall read. When he has fixed upon a chapter or book, his object is to get through with his task. He pores over the pages in a sleepy, dozing habit. He takes little interest in what he reads, for he does not appear to think that it concerns him. He has read the passages before, and he thinks therefore that he must understand it and that now no effort of attention is necessary; or he imagines that the difficulties he meets with are invincible — that they are mysteries, and were not intended to be understood; — and he therefore submits to the inevitable evil, and contents himself with reading the records of divine revelation without pretending to understand them.

Now this obscurity of the Scriptures, and the difficulties which lie in the way of a correct apprehension of their meaning, must not be mentioned as excuses for neglecting the study of them; nor must they be urged as objections against the wisdom and goodness of God in giving us a revelation in this way. For the great fundamental points of doctrine and duty are too explicit to be mistaken. And think you that it is unreasonable that God should require of us diligence and candor in the investigation of religious truth? The difficulties in Scripture are not insurmountable. If you will read with a careful, attentive, prayerful disposition; if you will read with a proper regard to order, beginning with the more obvious and practical parts and then proceeding to the more difficult, you need not despair of the result. New light will be constantly breaking in upon the sacred page, and you will have the satisfaction of becoming daily better acquainted with the divine dispensations.

You will say perhaps that you have no time to read the Bible; that your occupation is so engrossing, the demands upon your time are so numerous and constant, that you are precluded from undertaking this duty. Yet you can find time for many other things beside you business; you find time for your pleasures—time for your sloth—time for every thing that you wish to do, or think deserving your attention. Or do you say that the Bible is not worthy of your attention? There have been great and wise men who have thought otherwise. There was NEWTON, who bent the powers of his vast mind to grap-

ple with one of the most difficult subjects connected with biblical study,—I mean, its chronology; grasped at the obscure and evanescent forms under which divine wisdom has seen fit to veil its prophecies; and brought the treasures of his varied learning to purify the corrupted text. Listen to the testimony of one qualified to pronounce an opinion on the subject. 'I have,' says Sir WILLIAM JONES, 'regularly and attentively read these holy Scriptures, and am of opinion that this volume, independently of its divine origin, contains more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains both of poetry and eloquence than can be collected from all other books, in whatever age or language they may have been written.' And JOHN LOCKE, the father of the true philosophy of mind, has left upon record the following advice. 'Study the holy Scriptures, especially the New Testament; therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter.'

A. YOUNG.

---

KNOWLEDGE OF THE ORIGINAL CIRCUMSTANCES IMPORTANT IN READING THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The New Testament is a book composed of language, human language, and of course we must treat it as all language is treated that is to be understood; i. e. we must consider the circumstances

under which this language was used, the characters of the persons who use it, and the feelings of those to whom it was originally addressed. — I will explain what I mean in a few words. If in reading a narrative written two or three hundred years ago, of events that took place at the time, we should meet with repeated and numerous allusions to contemporaneous events, to the feelings and opinions, to the state of society and civil government, to the manners, customs and institutions of the period; it is evident that to understand the narrative thoroughly, we should have to go back, and acquaint ourselves with the state of things at the time it was written. Probably before the narrative comes into our hands we are familiar with the history of the age in which it was written. Then we shall readily understand it. But we are indebted for our understanding of it not to the book alone, but also to our previous knowledge.—Take another and perhaps a more striking instance. A book is published at the present day, recording very recent events, describing present manners and opinions; we read it and take its meaning with perfect ease. But then we should not understand it so easily, if in the perusal of it we were not continually and unconsciously referring to our knowledge of the existing state of things. We apprehend the meaning of the book at once, because we are familiar with present opinions and known facts implied or alluded to in the work. This very same book, in the course of a hundred years or more, when present modes of thinking and speaking shall have changed, when a new form shall have

been given to society, will become as difficult to be understood as an ancient work is to us now. We see that to read a book understandingly it is not enough to have the book alone; we must be more or less familiar with the state of things under which it was written, or else our knowledge of its contents will be very imperfect.

Now the New Testament is a book composed many hundred years ago in a particular dialect. It is not a general statement of abstract principles. It is a record of facts, and it is full throughout of allusions and references to the events of the times in which it was written, to the feeling and opinions then fashionable and prevalent. It is distinguished by the peculiar ways of speaking and forms of expression then used, and, except in the character and teaching of Jesus Christ which are in advance of every age, it bears on every page the impress of the particular period in which it purports to have appeared. Without some knowledge of the feelings, opinions, and general condition of the people among whom Jesus appeared, the New Testament may almost be said to be a sealed book. We must strive to forget our own customs and habits of thinking and speaking, and to go back and enter into the feeling of the Jewish multitude. We must familiarize ourselves with Jewish notions and prejudices. We must put off our European costume and assume the oriental garb, and domesticate ourselves in Judea, and endeavor to *live*, as it were, at that most eventful period of the world, when the arm that upholds all thing was made bare, when the stupendous

laws of nature were stopped and commanded to stand back, that the glorious dispensation of truth might enter in. In a word, if we would understand the christian records, we must become acquainted as intimately as we can with the circumstances under which they were written and under which the events they relate took place.

To this method of studying the New Testament it may be objected that it shuts the book to the ignorant and unlearned, who have neither the time nor the ability requisite to collect this various knowledge.

I reply in the first place, that if it were the design of Providence that we should understand the New Testament, wherein is the revealed will of God, equally well whether we are wise or whether we are ignorant, this book would not have been given to us, as it certainly is, in an unknown tongue. For the most imperfect translation of the Scriptures an amount of learning is required, which the great body of men never obtain.

But secondly, admitting that the objection has some force, I insist that vastly greater injury has been done by the views of the Scriptures and the manner of reading them which have most generally prevailed, than would follow the universal adoption of the views now proposed. What has been and is still to a very great extent the impression concerning the Bible? Why, it is regarded as if it were in its whole structure altogether different from all other books. Every text has been read as if it contained a separate and independent proposition. And it has been felt to be profanation to apply to scripture lan-

guage the rules, which language from its very nature requires in order to a just explication of its meaning. Of course no regard has been had to passages essentially obscure. The plain tenor of the Bible has been neglected and violated. Ignorance has dogmatized, and the fanciful have wrapt the Scriptures in mysticism, and the Christian world has been filled with wranglings, and ridicule and disgrace have been brought upon the holiest of subjects and the best of books.

Let that way of regarding the Scriptures which I have described be generally adopted; let it be felt that to understand the New Testament we must read and study it as we study all other ancient writings, giving constant heed to the circumstances of antiquity and availing ourselves of all the information we can gather concerning ancient opinions and usages and institutions; — the consequence would be, that a great many who consider themselves very mighty in the Scriptures would have to confess themselves mere babes. The ignorant would cease to build up strange dogmas upon texts which are obscure by reason of their relation to some circumstance or opinion which anciently existed, and which if known by us would make all plain. More reverence would be felt for the general tenor of the Bible. What is plain would be plain, unobscured by strange and mysterious doctrines. The unlearned would rest first and chiefly upon the main facts and simple truths of the Bible. Thanks be to God, these facts and truths are plain and he who runs may read; but they would be still more plain if they were not

overshadowed and darkened by the strange interpretations given to the obscure passages.

So far then from the Scriptures being closed to the unlearned if they were treated like other books,—as requiring labor and learning to elucidate them, they would become more clear; for the cloud which ignorance has conjured up out of the obscure texts would be dispelled, and the plain meaning of the Bible wherever it is plain would appear.

W. H. FURNESS.

---

THE GOSPEL HISTORY ENTITLED TO BELIEF.

[From Macknight's Harmony.]

The article which follows is taken from the 'Preliminary Observations' prefixed to Macknight's 'Harmony of the Four Gospels. Dr Macknight is chiefly known in this country through his 'Translation of the Apostolical Epistles, with a Commentary and Notes.' His work on the Gospels, in two octavo volumes, contains in the 'Paraphrase and Notes' a great amount of excellent matter, and I wonder that it has not been reprinted here. The dissertation 'concerning the credibility of the gospel history' presents a distinct and concise view of the grounds of reliance on the writing ascribed to the four evangelists. As the article is long for this work, I have omitted a few passages in which the argument is expanded without much increasing its force.

\*The history of Jesus Christ, contained in the writings of the evangelists, is credible for the following reasons.

1. These writings were published very near the time in which Jesus Christ, whose history they contain, is said to have lived. There are three arguments which prove this: — 1. The writers of the age immediately following that in which our Lord lived, and of the subsequent ages down to our own times, have mentioned the four gospels expressly by their names, have cited many passages out of them, and made numberless allusions both to facts and expressions contained in them, as unto things known and believed by all Christians; which they could not possibly have done, had the gospels not been extant at the time we affirm. Farther, by the same succession of writers still remaining it appears, that at and from the time when we suppose the gospels were published peculiar regard was paid to them by all Christians: they believed them to contain the only authentic records of Christ's life, and read then with the other scriptures in all their public assemblies. Hence translations of them were very early made into many different languages, some of which are still remaining. Moreover, exhortations to the people were drawn from them, every doctrine claiming belief was proved out of them, whatever was contrary to them was rejected as erroneous, they were appealed to as the standard in all the disputes which Christians had among themselves, and by arguments drawn from them they confuted heretics and false teachers. The enemies of Christianity themselves bear testimo-

ny to the antiquity of the gospels; particularly Porphyry, Julian, Hierocles, and Celsus, who draw several of their objections against the Christian religion from passages of our Lord's history contained in the gospels. The truth is, these books being early written and of general concernment were eagerly sought after by all, the copies of them multiplied fast, spread far, and came into the hands both of friends and foes; which is the reason that we have more ancient manuscript copies of the gospels still remaining, than of any other part of the sacred writings, or even of any other ancient book whatsoever.—2. The gospels were published very near the time in which Jesus is said to have lived, because the authors of the gospels call themselves his contemporaries, and affirm that they were eye and ear witnesses of the transactions which they relate, that they had a chief hand in several of them, and that all of them had happened a few years before they wrote. Had these things been false, as soon as the books which contained them came abroad, every reader must at once have discovered the fraud, and by that means the books themselves must have been universally condemned as mischievous forgeries, and altogether neglected. Whereas it is well known that they gained universal belief, that they were translated into many different languages, and that copies of them were preserved with the greatest care by those into whose hands they came.—3. In every instance where the evangelists had occasion to mention the manners and customs of the country which was the scene of their history, they have accurately described them; and, as often as their subject led

them to speak of Jewish affairs, they have done it in such a manner as to show that they were perfectly acquainted with them. But considering how extremely fluctuating the posture of affairs among the Jews was in that period, by reason of their intercourse with the Romans, such an exact knowledge of all the changes which happened could not possibly have entered into the supposititious work of any recent impostor. To have acquired such knowledge, the historian must both have been on the spot, and have lived near the times that are the subject of his history; which is what we contend for in behalf of the evangelists.

'These arguments prove that the gospels were published very near the time wherein they say our Lord lived. If so, they must be acknowledged to contain a true history of his life. For had any thing been told of him that was not consistent with the knowledge of his countrymen then living, it was in every one's power to have discovered and exposed the fraud. The great transactions of Christ's life, as they stand recorded in the gospels, were of the most public nature, and what the whole inhabitants of Judea were concerned in, especially the rulers and priests.—If the particulars found in the gospels had been fictitious, it is natural to think that the Jews, not only in their own country but every where else, would have disclaimed the facts both in conversation and writing immediately upon the first appearance of the books which asserted them, when they could easily have confuted them, the persons of whom such falsehoods were told being many of them then alive. Yet it

does not appear that any of them went this way to work, neither Jew nor Gentile in the earliest ages attempting to fix the stain of falsehood on the evangelists, or to disprove any of the facts contained in their histories. The truth is, the gospels were permitted to go abroad every where, without being called in question by any person; which could be owing to no cause whatsoever, but to the general belief which then prevailed, and to the particular persuasion of every individual capable of judging in such matters, that all the passages of the gospel history exhibited things certain and indubitable.

2. In the second place, the gospels are credible for this reason, that the principal facts contained in them are vouched, not only by all the Christian writers now remaining from the earliest ages down to the present time, but by the Jewish writers also, and even by the heathens themselves. For that Jesus Christ lived in Judea under the reign of the emperor Tiberius, both Tacitus, and Suetonius, and the younger Pliny, testify. That he gathered disciples, was put to death in an ignominious manner by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, and that after his death he was worshipped as a God, the same authors affirm. Nor does Porphyry himself, nor Julian the emperor, nor any other of the ancient enemies of Christianity, deny these things. On the contrary, they plainly acknowledge that miracles were done by Jesus and his apostles. And by ascribing them to the power of magic or to the assistance of demons, which was the solution given by Christ's enemies in his own life time, they have left us no room to doubt

of the sincerity of their acknowledgements. The writers likewise of the Talmudical books among the Jews acknowledge the principle transactions of Christ's life; for they durst not contradict, nor even pretend to doubt of facts so universally known. But they ridiculously imputed them to his having the true writing of the name JEHOVAH in his possession, which they said he stole out of the temple. In short, as Grotius has well expressed it, there is no history in the world more certain and indubitable than this, which is supported by the concurring testimony, not to say of so many men, but of so many different nations; divided indeed among themselves in other particulars, but all agreeing in acknowledging the truth of the matters containing the gospels. 27

'3. In the third place, the gospels are credible, because the principal facts contained in them are confirmed by monuments of great fame subsisting in every Christian country at this very day. For instance, baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the rite by which from the beginning men have been initiated into the profession of Christianity, keeps up the remembrance of Christ's having taught those sublime truths concerning the Father Almighty, the Son,\* and the Holy Spirit the Comforter, with which the world is now enlightened, as the gospels inform us.—The Lord's supper, celebrated frequently by all believers, prevents the memory of Christ's

---

\* Dr Macknight introduces the word 'eternal' before 'Son' in this place; but 'as eternal sonship' is an expression which many Christians of different persuasions consider improper, I have gladly omitted it.

death from being lost in any age or country of the world. The stated observation of the first day of the week, in honor of Christ's resurrection from the dead, hinders that grand event from falling into oblivion. And as these monuments perpetuate the memory, so they demonstrate the truth of the facts contained in the gospel history. For if Jesus Christ neither lived, nor taught, nor wrought miracles, nor died, nor rose again from the dead, it is altogether incredible that so many men, in countries so widely distant, should have conspired together to perpetuate such a heap of falsehoods, by beginning the observation of those institutions of baptism, and the Lord's supper, and the sabbath: incredible likewise, that, by continuing the observation of them, they should have imposed those falsehoods upon their posterity.

' Nor is this all: the truth of the gospel-history is demonstrated by a monument of greater fame still; I mean, the sudden conversion of a great part of the world from Judaism and from the many different forms of heathenism to Christianity, effected in all countries notwithstanding the sword of the magistrate, the craft of priests, the passions of the people, and the pride of the philosophers were closely combined to support their several national forms of worship and to crush the Christian faith. Had this total overthrow of all the religions then subsisting been brought to pass by the force of arms, the influence of authority, or the refinements of policy, it had been less to be wondered at. Whereas, having been accomplished by the preaching of twelve illiterate fishermen and their assistants, who were wholly desti-

tute of the advantages of birth, learning, and fortune, and who by condemning the established religions of all countries were every where looked upon as the most flagitious of men, and opposed accordingly with the utmost virulence by all, it is inconceivable how the world could be converted, if the facts recorded in the gospels were false. — Add to this, that, although the conversion of the world was sudden, it was not on that account unstable, or of short continuance. For the Christian religion has remained to this day in full vigor during the course of almost eighteen hundred years, notwithstanding its enemies every where strenuously attacked it both with arguments and arms. — Upon the whole, monuments so remarkable still subsisting in the world loudly proclaim the truth of the gospel history, because their original cannot be accounted for on any supposition but this; — that the reports contained in the gospel concerning the doctrine, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, after the strictest scrutiny which those who lived nearest to the time and place of action could make, were found to rest on proofs not to be gainsaid. And to entertain the least suspicion of the contrary, is to suppose that when the gospel was first preached all mankind in every country had renounced the common principles of sense and reason, or in other words were absolutely mad.

‘4. In the fourth place, the character of the evangelists, both as writers and men, renders their history credible in the highest degree. They were eye-witnesses and ministers of the ‘word,’ that is, of the things which they preached and wrote of, rela-

ting scarce any thing but what they either saw, or heard, or performed themselves. Now these being all matters obvious to sense, in judging of them neither acuteness of genius nor depth of learning were necessary, but only a sound understanding, a faithful memory, and organs of sense rightly disposed. Wherefore, though the evangelists were vulgar and illiterate men, the subject of their gospels being for the most part matters falling under the cognisance of sense, and in many of which they were themselves actors, they could not possibly be mistaken in them. And as they could not themselves be deceived in the things of which they wrote, so neither can it be imagined that they had any design to deceive the world. For it is well known that impostors always propose to themselves some reward or other of their fraud; riches it may be, or honors, or power. If so, those who think the evangelists impostors, ought to shew what advantages they promised to themselves by imposing upon the world such a story as their gospels. It is well known that these men set themselves in opposition to all the religions then in being, and required the express renunciation of them under the severest penalties; and by so doing made all the world their enemies. Hence it came, that instead of amassing riches or wallowing in luxury, the first Christians, but especially the ringleaders of the sect of the Nazarenes as they were called, the apostles and evangelists, were every where oppressed with poverty, hunger, nakedness, wretchedness. Instead of high offices of trust and power, the bitterest persecution awaited them in all

places, and death itself in its most terrible forms. Nor did these things befall them beyond their own expectations, by reason of cross accidents thwarting well-laid schemes. They knew what was to happen ; their Master had foretold it to them, Matt. x. 16, — 28. xxiv. 9. Luke xii. 11. John xvi. 1.—4. and they themselves expected no other things, Acts xx. 22, — 24. 1 Cor. iv. 9, &c.

'Now can it be imagined, that with the known loss of all that is dear in life, with the constant peril of death, and with the certain prospect of damnation, a number of men in their right wits should have propagated what they were sensible was a gross falsehood, and have persisted in the fraud even to death, sealing their testimony with their blood ? No : this is a pitch of folly which human nature is not capable of. And therefore we must acknowledge that the evangelists, and all the first witnesses of our Lord's miracles and doctrine, who by the Providence of God were generally thus brought to seal their testimony with their blood, were fully persuaded of the truth of what they published in their sermons and writings. — It is not to the purpose to reply, that enthusiasts have suffered persecution and even death in support of false opinions. For although a person's dying for his opinions does not prove their truth, it certainly proves the martyr's persuasion of the truth of his opinions. Let this be granted in the case of the evangelists, and the controversy is at an end. For if they themselves really believed what they wrote, and could not possibly have any intention to deceive us, their gospels must doubtless be true ; the things

contained in them being generally matters obvious to sense, which enthusiasm could by no means dis-color, and in judging of which persons of the meanest capacities could not be deceived.

'5. In the last place, the perfect agreement subsisting between the gospels rightly understood, and the modesty wherewith they are written, are circumstances which heighten their credibility not a little. The apparent inconsistencies observable in some of the narrations when compared together prove undeniably, that the evangelists were in no combination to make up their histories and deceive the world. In many instances these inconsistencies are of such a kind as would lead one to believe, that the subsequent historians did not compare the accounts of particular transactions which they were about to publish with those that were abroad in the world. Each evangelist represented the matters which are the subject of his history as his own memory under the direction of the Spirit suggested them to him, without considering how far they might be agreeable to the accounts which his brethren historians had already given.\* At the same time, the easy and full reconciliation of these inconsistencies, which arises from a proper knowledge of the gospels and of the manners and customs of antiquity, admirably discovers the sober spirit of truth by which those writers were guided in every part of their narrations.

---

\* It may be questioned, whether the language in this sentence, and also in the next, does not need some qualification.

' Moreover, the modesty wherewith the evangelists have written their histories is very remarkable; for none of them singly has related all the transactions of our Lord's life. Neither do they all together relate the whole of them. So far are they from giving a complete history, that it is but a few of the particulars which are preserved even among them all. And such things as they have thought fit to mention, though great and wonderful above measure, they have not painted with the gaudy colorings of rhetoric nor heightened with the magnificence of pompous language, but have told them with a simplicity unexampled in so great a subject. And as they have not studied human eloquence in the composition of their histories, so they have not followed human prudence in the choice of their subjects. For although they must have been sensible that the transactions they were about to relate were not likely to be believed by the generality, being many of them opposite to the established course of nature, it is evident that they were at no pains to consider what particulars were least liable to exception, nor so much as to obviate the difficulties which arose from them. This thought a late writer has well expressed. "It does not appear (says he,) that it ever came into the mind of the evangelists to consider how this or that other action would appear to mankind, or what objections might be raised against them. But without attending at all to this, they lay the facts before you, at no pains to think whether they would appear credible or not. If the reader will not believe the testimony, there is no help for it. They

tell the truth, and attend to nothing else." — To conclude, it is remarkable that through the whole of their histories the evangelists have not passed one encomium upon Jesus or upon any of his friends, nor thrown out one reflection against his enemies, although much of both kinds might have been and no doubt would have been done by them, had they been governed either by a spirit of imposture or enthusiasm. Christ's life is not praised in the gospels, his death is not lamented, his friends are not commended, his enemies are not reproached nor even blamed, but every thing is told naked and unadorned, just as it happened ; and all who read are left to judge and make reflections for themselves ; a manner of writing which the historians never would have fallen into, had not their minds been under the guidance of the most sober reason, and deeply impressed with the dignity, importance, and truth of their subject.

' By the force of these and such like arguments has the gospel history gained a belief next to universal in ages past ; and by these it stands at present firmly established against the manifold violent attacks of its enemies, who with unwearied application are assaulting it on all quarters. In a word, founded upon these arguments it can never be overturned in any age to come ; but while men are capable of discerning truth, will be believed and received to the end of the world.

' **COROLLARY.—If the gospel history is true, the Christian religion must needs be divine.'**

## ACQUAINTANCE WITH SACRED GEOGRAPHY.

Sacred Geography describes the countries and places of which we read in the Bible. Some acquaintance with it is necessary to one who would derive from the Scriptures either the pleasure or the instruction which they are capable of imparting. Mr Worcester, who is well known for his excellent geographical works, has observed, that "some knowledge of the countries and places, in which the memorable transactions recorded in the Bible took place, cannot but be regarded as important; as it affords assistance in understanding the Scriptures, and in enabling one to read them with satisfaction and advantage; and the facts recorded are more firmly impressed on the mind by connecting them with the places where they occurred. Yet this is a branch of learning which has been much neglected; and nothing is more common than to meet with well educated persons, who have little acquaintance with the subject."

The justice of these remarks cannot be questioned. The Bible is much more *read* than *studied*; yet no book in the world requires more constant or diligent application of mind in its perusal. A knowledge of the country in which the Patriarchs lived, towards which Moses led the people of God, in which David reigned and sang, and the Prophets uttered their fearful predictions, in which in later times Jesus Christ discharged his ministry and gave the sacrifice of his life to the cause of human salvation, and from which his gospel was borne into all parts of the Roman Empire by his Apostles — a knowledge of the sit-

uation and internal geography of this land is indispensable to a full enjoyment either of the Old or of the New Testament. To one who is ignorant on these points many passages must be obscure, and the force and beauty of many others must be lost. The Bible is almost throughout a history. Now who would think of reading a history without having or seeking some acquaintance with the places in which its scenes were laid ? The Bible is full of local allusion, illustration and sentiment. To read it without any knowledge of the country in which it was written is like examining a picture by twilight.

Palestine is in another quarter of the globe from that which we inhabit. It is more than 5000 miles distant. Not one American in ten thousand ever saw or ever will see it. It is under a different climate, and the habits, manners and institutions of the people always have been suited to the eastern part of the world. The people of this land had more or less intercourse with the surrounding nations and with other countries; as we have perpetual occasion to observe in reading their history. Unless we have some acquaintance with Eastern Geography, we cannot understand the circumstances under which that intercourse was conducted, and shall often lose the force or mistake the meaning of passages.

Let no one be discouraged by these remarks, under the impression that they are designed to recommend a study which few can prosecute. A competent knowledge of sacred geography is very easily acquired, and therefore a neglect of it is the less excusable. If any are so situated that they cannot ob-

tain this knowledge, they are not to be blamed; nor is their condition one of deplorable darkness. The Bible may still be to them a store-house of spiritual truths, of wise counsels, of holy consolations. They may understand and enjoy all that is necessary for their present or future good. But they who have greater opportunities should use them for their own improvement; that the Bible may be to them a still richer source of instruction and delight. An hour's study given every day to this subject would in a short time render one familiar with the Holy Land. There are many convenient books that might be taken as helps. Scarcely a school geography is published, which has not a few pages devoted to this country. Even without a book, a map, if carefully examined and used for reference in reading the Bible, will give us sufficiently accurate ideas respecting the situation of places. I shall offer in successive numbers some familiar remarks on Palestine, which with the aid of the map will enable those who have the least time to gain a sufficient knowledge of sacred geography.

---

MAPS OF PALESTINE.

It is only within a few years that we have had convenient and correct maps of Palestine. Attention has of late been given to the subject, and no room is now open for complaint respecting uncertainty hanging over the situation of places, or difficulty in obtaining faithful delineations of the Holy Land.

Almost all general atlases include a map of this country. Some editions of the Bible, and many other books on sacred history, contain maps suited to illustrate the text. 'A Vocabulary of the principal words in the New Testament, and a Dictionary of proper names, by H. G. O. Dwight' — a very good little book to keep on one's table or for the teacher to carry to the Sunday school, — has two neat maps, one of Canaan, the other of the Travels and Voyages of St Paul. Besides these there are collections of maps for the illustration of Scripture; such as the Bible Atlas, published at New Haven some years ago, containing nine maps each about four inches square, and Worcester's Scripture Atlas, containing six maps of a rather larger size carefully drawn and well engraved. This last is recommended both by its accuracy and its price, and may be found at most bookstores.

By far the most valuable map, I do not know but it might be said the most valuable contribution that has been made to sacred geography, is 'The Historical Map of Palestine or the Holy Land,' described in the advertisement of the publishers in language which its deserts justify, as 'exhibiting a correct and masterly delineation of the peculiar geographical features of the country, and of all places therein, interspersed with more than two hundred vignettes and emblems, illustrative of interesting events recorded in the Bible, introduced topographically, from the best authorities; originally delineated by Mr J. T. Assheton, London; now greatly improved, and furnished

with a complete Geographical Index, &c., by Joseph W. Ingraham. Boston. 1828.'

This beautiful map measures rather more than three feet in length and two in breadth. It was prepared for the engravers with the greatest care by Mr Ingraham, and was executed by them with an accuracy and taste that have seldom been exceeded in this department of the arts. It is an invaluable accession to the means which the biblical scholar may use in his studies, and at the same time by the character of the vignettes scattered over the map with references to the passages of Scripture to which they point, it is suited to interest children in the study of the Bible. I cannot hesitate in saying that every religious society should be supplied with one of these maps for the use of Sunday school teachers, Bible classes, &c. The price is far from exorbitant.

Mr Ingraham has published and is preparing some other cheaper maps, and is also engaged in writing a Gazetteer of the Bible, which his intimate and faithful acquaintance with this branch of knowledge will render worthy of entire confidence.

The map which accompanies this number of the Interpreter has been struck from plates engraved for Wilbur's Reference Bible. It is generally accurate, and may be used in the study either of the Old or of the New Testament, as the divisions of the country during both periods of time are represented. It will be found convenient for purposes of reference in reading future numbers of the Interpreter.

## GENERAL FEATURES OF PALESTINE.

Palestine is known in the Bible by different names. It is first mentioned as the Land of Canaan, which name it derived from the grandson of Noah. It is sometimes called the Land of Israel, because it was occupied by the Israelites ; and sometimes the whole country is designated as the Land of Judah or Judea, though this name properly belongs to that part which constituted the kingdom of Judah after the division of the land in the time of Rehoboam. It is also styled the Holy Land, because it was the scene of those events which are recorded in the sacred history. The name of Palestine is of the same import with Philistia, or the Land of the Philistians, a heathen people who inhabited the southwestern part of this territory and gave their name to the whole.

When we first read of this land in the book of Genesis, it was in the possession of Pagan tribes. It was the residence of the Patriarchs through great part of their lives, during the abode of the children of Israel in Egypt, it was inhabited by fierce and licentious idolators ; upon its conquest by Joshua it was divided among the twelve tribes, who were formed first into a republic, then into a kingdom under Saul, and afterwards into the rival kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Upon the overthrow of these kingdoms, Palestine passed through the hands of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Macedonians, and Syrians, under which last nation it remained, with the ex-

ception of a brief interval of independence in the time of the Maccabees, till it was included within the Roman empire, to which it belonged during the ministry of our Lord and his apostles. The Saracens subsequently became its masters; the crusades were undertaken to deliver it from the yoke of infidel tyranny, and for a time the Christians held it in their power; but it reverted to its former lords, and for centuries it has been under Mahomedan sway. It now forms a part of the Turkish empire, and is divided between two Governors, neither of whom resides within the proper boundaries of the Holy Land. The Pasha of Acre reckons the places along the Mediterranean within his province, but Jerusalem and the greater part of Palestine are subject to the Pasha of Damascus.

This country, which has seen so many changes and is an object of such deep interest to the civilized world, is a small district in the western part of Asia, lying along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. Its general shape is that of a parallelogram, the longest sides extending from north to south. Its length does not exceed 190 miles; in width it is very unequal, varying from 40 to 90 miles. That part which lies west of the Jordan, consisting of Galilee, Samaria and Judea, contains about as many square miles as are included in the State of Massachusetts. This country is bounded on the west by that part of the Mediterranean Sea which is now called the Levant, on the north-west by Phenicia or the territory of Tyre and Sidon which interposes a narrow strip of land between Palestine and the Sea, on the north and north-

east by the mountains which separate it from Syria, on the east by the Desert of Syria, and on the south by Idumea a part of Arabia Petræa. It extends from latitude 31 to 33 $\frac{1}{2}$  degrees north, and in its greatest width from 34 $\frac{1}{2}$  to 36 $\frac{1}{2}$  degrees of east longitude. It is nearly under the same parallels of latitude as the States of North Carolina and Tennessee.

In looking upon the map of Palestine, the first objects that attract notice are its mountains and its waters. It was described by Moses as ‘a land of hills and valleys;’ and we at once see that it is divided between ranges of mountains and extensive plains. On the north are the ridges of Libanus and Anti-Libanus, or the Mountains of Lebanon, of which frequent mention is made in the Old Testament, and whose cedars were the pride of the Jewish forest. South of the bay on which lies the modern town of Acre anciently Ptolemais (Acts xxi. 7,) appear the heights of Carmel, distinguished by the fertility with which it was clothed, as its name, *the garden of God*, indicates. South-east of Carmel, and not far from the southern extremity of the Sea of Galilee, Mount Tabor lifts its solitary head. It stands in the northern part of the plain of Esdraelon, and was covered with verdure to its summit, which terminates in a plain of such extent as formerly to have been the site of a city. South-east of Tabor, near the western bank of the Jordan, the Mountains of Gilboa remind us of the beautiful lamentations of David over ‘Saul and over Jonathan his son.’ The Mountains of Ephraim occupy the centre of the country west of the Jordan, called

also the Mountains of Samaria, and of Israel ; Ebal and Gerizim belonged to the northern part of this range. The Mountains of Judah and of Judea extend in broken peaks along the whole southern part of the land between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea. All the mountains on the western side of the Jordan may be considered as branches of one range. On the eastern side of the Jordan ran a distinct range, called in the northern part the Mountains of Bashan, in the middle region the Mountains of Gilead, and towards the south the Abarim Mountains, till they were lost in the desert. The most remarkable elevation in this range was Mount Nebo or Pisgah, which lay opposite Jericho, whence Moses took his first and last view of the Promised Land, (Deut. xxxii. 49.)

In contrast with its mountains, Palestine presents frequent vallies and broad plains. Of these three are particularly distinguished by their extent. 1. The first stretches along the coast of the Mediterranean from the south-western corner of the land to mount Carmel ; the southern half of this plain included the five great cities of the Philistines and was called The Plain, while the northern half reaching from Joppa to Carmel was known by the name of Sharon. 2. The plain of Esdraelon, called also the Plain of Jezreel and the Great Plain, extends across the northern part of the country from Mount Carmel and the Mediterranean to the southern border of the Lake of Gennesareth ; it is nearly thirty miles long, and about ten broad. It is remarkable for its fertility, and is memorable in the history of the wars

of the land. "It has been a chosen place for encampment in every contest carried on in this country from the days of Nebuchadonosar king of the Assyrians until the disastrous march of Napoleon Buonaparte from Egypt into Syria. Jews, Gentiles, Saracens, christian Crusaders, and anti-christian Frenchmen, Egyptians, Persians, Druses, Turks, and Arabs, warriors out of 'every nation which is under heaven' have pitched their tents upon the plain of Esdraelon, and have beheld the various banners of their nations wet with the dews of Tabor and of Hermon."\* 3. The Plain of the Jordan, or 'the region round about Jordan' (Matt. iii. 5,) skirts the Jordan on each side from the Lake of Gennesareth to the Dead Sea.

Of the waters of Palestine the most remarkable, whether from size or from frequency of mention in the Bible, are the Lake of Gennesareth, the Dead Sea, and the river Jordan. The first of these is known in Scripture under different names, the Sea of Galilee, the Sea of Tiberias, the Lake of Gennesareth; each of which it derives from its situation, the land of Gennesareth and the city of Tiberias lying on its western shore, and the whole lake being included within Lower Galilee. It lies a little east of north of Jerusalem at the distance of about 70 miles. It is remarkable in the history of our Lord's life. Near it he passed a large part of his ministry. They who were first called to be his disciples pursued their occupation as fishermen on its waters. Upon its shores

---

\* Clarke's Travels, as quoted by Horne and Ingraham.

lay Capernaum, Tiberias, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and the country of the Gergesenes or Gadarenes—the land around and between these two towns on the eastern side of the lake. This sea is of an oval shape, in length from north to south about 16 miles, in breadth about 6 miles. Its waters are said to be clear and sweet, and to abound with fish; as in the time of Christ; (John xxi. 11.) It is however liable to violent gusts of wind, which produce high waves, as was the case formerly; (Matt. xiv. 24 and Mark iv. 37.)

In the south-eastern part of Palestine we meet the Dead Sea, or the Sea of the Plain, or the Salt Sea, as it is called in the Old Testament. It is also styled the Lake of Sodom, because it covers the space once occupied by the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, (Gen. xix. 24, 25); and the Lake Asphaltites, from the large quantities of asphaltus or bitumen found on its waters and shores. Its extent is so differently estimated by ancient and by modern writers, that it is thought to have formerly been of greater dimensions than at present. It is now supposed not to exceed 70 miles in length from north to south, and in its broadest part, near the centre, not to exceed 17 miles from west to east. The waters of this lake are very salt and bitter, and the land around it is barren and dreary; hence were given it the names of the Salt and the Dead Sea. Stories have prevailed respecting the character of its waters and of the air about it, which travellers have proved to be false; but all agree in describing it as a stagnant, sulphureous lake, whose surface is never disturbed by human voyagers, and whose

neighborhood is on every side of most forbidding aspect.

The river Jordan is the only stream of considerable magnitude in the Holy Land. It runs from the northern boundary of the land through the lake Merom and the Sea of Gallilee to the Dead Sea, into the northern side of which it empties its waters in a strong and full current. Its course is south, but between the two seas it has many windings. Its length from its source to its mouth is about 120 miles. Its spring is at the foot of the mountains of Lebanon, a few miles north of the town of Dan or Cæsarea Philippi, from which it receives its name of Jordan, or the river of Dan. The Lake Merom through which it flows is 15 miles north of the Sea of Tiberias, and is at some seasons a pond six or seven miles long and between three and four broad, but in the dry months is only a marsh. The breadth and depth of the Jordan vary in different places. Upon leaving the Sea of Galilee, it is said to be from 150 to 200 feet wide, and 7 feet deep. Its size depends upon the season. When the snows on the mountains are melted, its stream is swollen and overflows its usual banks, like our river Connecticut in the spring. ‘Jordan,’ says the sacred historians, ‘overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest;’ (Joshua iii. 15.) It is sometimes described as having two channels. Upon its banks grows that kind of vegetation which affords a retreat for wild beasts, who are driven from their shelter by the rise of the waters; from which circumstance the prophet borrows a fine figure to describe a sudden invasion; (Jeremiah xlix. 19.)

## DIVISIONS OF PALESTINE.

We have already seen, that the Jordan together with the waters of the Lake of Gennesareth and the Dead Sea divided Palestine into two parts, the eastern and the western. This natural division of the country is continually regarded in the Scriptures, the eastern section being described in the Old Testament as ‘the other side Jordan’ and in the New as ‘beyond Jordan,’ while the western part of the land is designated as ‘this side Jordan,’ the writers residing within its limits.

When we proceed to examine the artificial divisions of the country, we must distinguish between the periods in which it was held by different masters, and was therefore differently partitioned. A disregard of a rule so obviously proper will involve the whole subject of sacred geography in confusion, as a careful attention to it may enable us to unravel and reconcile what may at first seem difficulties or inconsistencies in the various narratives. In reading this single volume which we call the Bible, we should never forget that we have the history of more than 4000 years in our hands, and that while in the first part of the volume we read of Palestine as it was in the days of the patriarchs, we need not turn many leaves to learn its condition under the kings of Israel nearly ten centuries later, and that the scenes which hallowed or polluted the land in the time of Christ were removed at a distance from these last of still ten centuries more. Hence we must not be surprised, but rather

should expect, to find the same places mentioned in different parts of the volume under different names; as for example, ‘the land of Canaan’ was the favorite designation of the whole country with Moses and Joshua, but this use of the word occurs in the New Testament only twice, in both instances in a reference to the ancient history of the land; (Acts vii. 11, and xiii. 19.) So the sea of Galilee was known in the time of Moses not by this a comparatively modern name, but as the Sea of Cinnereth; (as in Numb. xxxiv. 11.)

It will be sufficient if we distinguish four periods in the history of the land as recorded by the sacred writers;—that of the heathen nations who were dispossessed by the children of Israel, that which intervened between the conquest of the land and the erection of the rival kingdoms of Israel and Judah, that which followed this division, and that during which our Lord and his apostles dwelt on earth. In attempting to give the topography of Palestine under each of these periods, I must desire my readers to lay before them the map in the last number of the Interpreter. The representation on the same ground of the localities of successive eras is one reason of the crowded appearance of the map.

At the time of the invasion under Joshua, Canaan was occupied by idolatrous, fierce and licentious tribes. Of these seven are particularly noted as numerous and powerful. ‘When the Lord thy God,’ said Moses to his people, ‘shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the

Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations, greater and mightier than thou.' (Deut. vii. 1. See also Josh. iii. 10.) Each of these 'nations' possessed a narrow territory, and probably resembled in the extent and nature of their government the Indian tribes who occupied New England before the coming of the Pilgrims. All these seven nations lived on the western side of the Jordan, which was originally intended to be the abode of the whole Israelitish people. We cannot ascertain the precise limits of each people. From Numbers xiii. 29, where it is said that 'the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains, and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan'; from Joshua xi. 3, where after a similar description of the position of those four nations, to whom is joined the Perizzite as also dwelling 'in the mountains,' it is added, 'the Hivite' lives 'under Hermon in the land of Mizpeh'; from Judges iii. 3, where we are told that 'the Hivites dwelt in mount Lebanon'; from Joshua xv. 63, where the Jebusites are described as 'the inhabitants of Jerusalem'; and from the resemblance between the names of Girgashite and Gergesene, which we know was confined to a tract near the sea of Gennesareth, (Matt. viii. 28); from these hints, which are all that we have, we are able to decide, that the *Hivites* occupied the northern part of the country, [the *Girgashites* a region south of the *Hivites*, the *Canaanites* a tract still farther to the south and stretching from the western sea to the Jordan, the *Jebusites* the city and neighborhood of Jerusalem,

the *Hittites*, *Amorites*, and *Perizzites* the country extending southward from the head of the Sea of Sodom to the southern boundary of the land. Of these nations the *Amorites* were the most powerful, while it will be observed that the name of Canaanite was confined to the inhabitants of a small part of Canaan. The political organization of these tribes was very loose; Joshua enumerates among them thirty one 'kings', each of whom was probably in effect an independent chieftain. They were 'the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel smote on this side Jordan on the west, from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon even unto the mount Halak that goeth up to Seir'; (Josh. xii. 7—24.)

Before the children of Israel could enter on the promised inheritance 'this side Jordan,' they were obliged to subdue the country on the eastern side of the river; and here were also Pagan and warlike nations, under two kings, who ruled over the whole territory 'from Aroer which is by the bank of the river Arnon', that issues from the northeastern corner of the Dead Sea, 'even unto mount Sion which is Hermon', in the northern extremity of the land; (Deut. iv. 47, 48.) These kings were Og king of *Bashan*, the seat of whose power was at *Ashtaroth* or *Edrei* east of the sea of Galilee, and Sihon king of the *Amorites*, who dwelt at *Heshbon* in the same latitude with *Jericho*; (Deut. i. 4.) The boundaries of each of these kingdoms are given in Joshua xii. 1—5.

There were still other nations, who lived on the borders of Palestine, and who interposed difficulties in the passage of the Israelites to the Promised Land.

Of these the first to oppose their progress were the *Amalekites*, who, ‘fought with Israel in Rephidim’ (Exod. xvii. 8); and whose country was the region lying on the south and west of Palestine over which they probably roamed as their wants or inclinations prompted. The *Edomites* occupied the land south of the Dead Sea, stretching both east and west and including the mountains of Seir and Hor. This region is in the Prophets called Idumea; (as in Ezek. xxxv. 15.) It was inhabited by the descendants of Esau; which led Moses, when he sent a message to the king of Edom soliciting a passage through his country, to declare that it came from his ‘brother Israel;’ (Numb. xxi. 14.) The *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, descendants of Lot (Gen. xix. 37, 38,) dwelt, the former on the east of the Dead Sea, and the latter east of the kingdom of the Amorites. An account of the manner in which the Ammonites came into possession of their land, by wresting it from former owners, as also of a similar title which the Edomites acquired to their land, may be found in Deut. ii. 20—23. These nations retained their power till the time of the Judges; (Judges iii. 30; xi. 33.) The *Midianites* lived within or near the borders of the Moabites, east of the Dead Sea. They were almost destroyed by an army sent out by Moses (Numb. xxxi. 1—12); yet before the time of Gideon they had recovered their strength. (See Judges vi. and vii.) The *Philistines*, who are mentioned more often than any other of the idolatrous enemies of Israel, and with whom being left unsubdued by Joshua (Josh. xiii. 1—3) they were compelled in subsequent times to maintain almost per-

petual war, inhabited a tract of country in the south-western part of Palestine, on the Mediterranean Sea. They had five principal cities, Ekron, Ashdod, Gath, Askelon, and Gaza. One of the earliest acts of David's reign was to subdue the Philistines, whom however he was far from exterminating. Indeed remnants of all the heathen nations existed in the land, and were a source of great mischief to the people of Israel. (Judges iii. 1—7. 1 Kings ix. 20, 21.)

When the Israelites under the command of Joshua had secured a residence in Palestine, the land was to be divided among the twelve tribes. The descendants of Levi had been taken for the priesthood, and would receive their inheritance in cities situated within the portions of the other tribes; but the tribe of Joseph had given place to the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, and the original number among whom the division of the land was to be made was thus preserved. The tribes of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh preferred a residence on the eastern side of the Jordan; ten portions therefore were to be assigned on the west side of the river, one for each of the nine tribes and one for the half of Manasseh. It is difficult to determine with precision the boundaries of each portion; sometimes one tribe possessed land within the limits of another: still they can be drawn with sufficient accuracy.

On the east side of the Jordan, the northern allotment fell to the half tribe of *Manasseh*, to whom was given the land on that side of the river from its source to the Sea of Cinnereth, and on the east side of the Sea to its southern boundary, whence the portion of

this tribe extended to a considerable distance in a southeastern direction. The central part was assigned to the children of *Gad*, whose territory, embracing the bank of the river from the Lake of Cinnereth almost to the Dead Sea, was towards the north a narrow strip of land between the river and the portion of Manasseh, but after a few miles spread out in width and ran off to the southeast. South of *Gad* were situated the tribe of *Reuben*, whose land, bounded on the west by the Jordan and on the south-west by the Dead Sea, extended thence to the eastern border of Palestine. This division of the country on the east side of the Jordan is particularly described in Joshua xiii. 15—32.

The tribes who settled on the hither side of the Jordan received their portions by lot (Josh. xiv. 2); according to which the northern part, or that which afterwards was known by the name of Galilee, fell to *Asher*, *Naphtali*, *Zebulon* and *Issachar*; the middle, or what was at a subsequent period called *Samaria*, to the half tribe of *Manasseh* who crossed the river and to *Ephraim*; the southern, or that which was called *Judea* in the time of Christ, to *Dan*, *Benjamin*, *Simeon* and *Judah*. A careful eye will be able to distinguish in the map lines of very small dots, marking the boundaries of the several tribes. The children of *Asher* never acquired possession of the whole territory appropriated to them; Tyre and Sidon retained their independence, and their land formed a barrier between *Asher* and the Great Sea. *Naphtali* drew a lot east of *Asher*, like theirs narrow and long, extending some miles on the western shore of

the sea of Cinnereth. The portion of *Zebulon* lay south of *Asher* and *Naphtali*, and covered the breadth of the land from the one sea to the other, embracing the Plain of Jezreel (or Esdraelon), and including within its southern limits Mount Tabor. *Issachar* received an allotment south of *Zebulon*, and *Manasseh* south of *Issachar*; but the portion of the latter was very irregular in shape, and included some districts within the boundaries of *Issachar* and *Asher* (Josh. xvii. 11); its western border was the shore of the Mediterranean, and its eastern the Jordan. *Ephraim* dwelt south of *Manasseh*, and occupied also the whole breadth of the land west of the river. *Dan* inherited a portion bounded north by *Ephraim*, and west by the Great Sea, and on the east by *Simeon* and *Judah*; a small district, which was soon found not to be large enough for this tribe. A party therefore went in pursuit of another residence, and crossing the country to its extreme northern part fought ‘against Leshem and took it, and dwelt therein and called it Dan after the name of Dan their father’ (Josh. xix. 47.) Hence arose the expression, ‘from Dan even to Beersheba’, to describe the whole country or people; this city of *Dan* lying in the northeastern part, and *Beersheba* in the opposite or south-western extremity. *Benjamin* occupied the region between *Dan* and the Jordan, in which were the cities of *Jerusalem* and *Jericho*. *Simeon* drew the southwestern portion, having *Judah* on the east, *Dan* on the north, and the Mediterranean on west. Neither *Simeon* nor *Dan* obtained possession of the whole territory assigned to them. The Phil-

istines dwelt within the portion of these tribes, and were never effectually subdued till the time of the Maccabees, centuries after the migration from Egypt. To *Judah* was at first given the whole of the southern part of Palestine, from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea (Josh. xv. 1—12); but as it afterwards appeared that this ‘was too much for them’ (Josh. xix. 9,) Simeon and Dan received their inheritance within the limits originally marked out for Judah. This tribe therefore occupied the district between Simeon and the Dead Sea, having the whole extent of the Sea for its eastern boundary, while on the north it touched the line of Benjamin and thence extended south to the wilderness.

Such was the distribution of the land made by Joshua; a full account of which may be found in the book of Joshua, from the thirteenth to the nineteenth chapters inclusive. An attention to this arrangement of the tribes will throw light on many passages in the Old Testament.

After the revolt of the ten tribes from Rehoboam, and the erection of a separate kingdom under Jeroboam, the land was divided between the rival monarchies of *Judah* and *Israel*. The latter included the northern and central parts of the land, the former was confined to the southern. The line of division probably ran a little south of the northern boundary of Benjamin. The capital of the kingdom of Judah remained at Jerusalem, while that of Israel was at first fixed at Shechem (1 Kings xii. 25), but was afterwards removed to Samaria (1 Kings, xvi. 24, 29.) The latter kingdom existed 254 years, till it was

overthrown by the Assyrians; the former nearly 400 years, or till the Babylonish captivity.

When Jesus Christ appeared, and during his ministry and that of his apostles, Palestine was subject to the Romans, who had divided it into four provinces, Galilee, Samaria, and Judea on the western side of the Jordan, and Perea on the eastern. *Galilee* extended from the northern limits of Palestine to the Plain of Jezreel; and was divided into two parts, the northern or Upper Galilee, and the southern or Lower Galilee. The former was called Galilee of the Gentiles, from its propinquity to the heathen nations of Phenicia and Syria, as well as from the fact that many Gentiles resided within its borders; (Matt. iv, 15. Mark vii. 26.) Our Saviour visited Upper Galilee, but Lower Galilee was distinguished by his residence in its cities. Nazareth where he was ‘brought up’ (Luke iv. 16), and Capernaum where he ‘dwelt’ (Matt. iv. 13), were in Lower Galilee. The inhabitants of this province spake a corrupt dialect, by which they were known from other Jews; as we learn from the reply of men around Peter when he denied that he was a disciple of Jesus,—‘Surely thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean and thy speech agreeth thereto,’ (Mark xiv. 70.) The people of Judea affected a superiority over the inhabitants of Galilee.

South of Galilee and occupying the middle of the country was *Samaria*, inhabited by a mixed race, the descendants of Pagan and Jewish families who occupied the land after the downfall of the kingdom of Israel. It is related in the second book of the

Kings, (xvii. 24—29,) that after carrying the greater part of the inhabitants into captivity the king of Assyria brought men from other countries, ‘and placed them in the cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel.’ They were idolaters, but being taught by a priest who was sent among them upon their own request they became worshippers of Jehovah, while they still retained much of their heathen faith and practice. With these colonists the miserable remnant of the Israelites, who were left in the land, were gradually incorporated. In the course of time, the religion of the whole people was assimilated to that of the Jews, but on some points a strong and irreconcilable difference existed. In the time of Christ an inveterate hatred prevailed between the two races, more bitter probably on the part of the Jews than of the Samaritans. The Jews disowned the Samaritans, applied to them opprobrious epithets, and would have no dealings with them; (John iv. 9.) As Samaria lay between Galilee and Judea, the direct course from one to the other of these districts was through this province; (John iv. 4.)

The southern part of Palestine during the Roman sway was called *Judea*, being the same territory which had constituted the kingdom of Judah, reaching from Galilee to Idumea, and embracing the whole region between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea. Thither Jesus went to keep the great feasts at Jerusalem, and there occurred the events of his death and resurrection, which have made Judea the most memorable part of the globe.

That part of Palestine which lies on the east of

the Jordan, and was distinguished by the general name of *Perea*, was divided into several smaller districts. The most northern was *Abilene*, situated between the Mountains of Libanus, and Anti-Libanus; it is mentioned in Luke iii. 1. *Trachonitis* (Luke iii. 1,) and *Iturea*, (Luke iii. 1,) called also *Auranitis*, were situated to the north-east of the Sea of Galilee. *Gaulonitis* on the east of the Sea, and *Batanea* east of *Gaulonitis*, are not mentioned in the New Testament. *Decapolis*, or ‘the ten cities,’ (from two Greek words bearing this signification,) is mentioned in Matt. iv. 25, Mark v. 20, and vii. 31; but the names and situation of these cities are not accurately fixed; they must have been in the northern part of the region beyond the Jordan. The southern part, or the land included between the river Jabbok on the north and the river Arnon on the south, was called *Perea*, the name which we have seen was also given to the whole country beyond the Jordan.

---

## MANNER OF CHRIST'S TEACHING.

[From Townson's Works.]

Among the works of the Rev. Thomas Townson, a clergyman of the English church, who died in 1792, and who is chiefly known by his ‘Discourses on The Gospels,’ is a sermon on the ‘manner of our Saviour’s teaching,’ a part of which is taken for this article.

'As every speaker of a superior mind will have something distinguishing in the mode of his discoursing, we may justly expect to find a peculiarity of this sort in the most exalted Person that ever dwelt among men. And what was characteristic in his manner is so clearly marked and so uniformly sustained throughout the Gospels, that if we wanted evidence of their fidelity, this were a strong presumption that what he spake is faithfully recorded.

One thing remarkable in the manner of his teaching is frequent allusion to things that were before the eyes of his audience, to occurrences of the time, to the season of the year, to the offices of common life, or the usual employment of those to whom he spake. As sensible and present objects most powerfully affect us, he who knew what was in man condescended to instruct us from those things that are most easily conceived by us, and most naturally command our attention. High and heavenly truths were presented to his hearers in a familiar dress; as angels of old came to Abraham and the Patriarchs with the shape and countenance of men. Truths thus qualified struck the imagination without alarming it; and would recur to the memory on sight of the objects with which they were associated in his doctrine. The birds which were flying in the air around him, the lilies which were flowering on the plain where he stood, were turned into lessons on the providence and fatherly care of the Almighty\*. The sowers who were sowing their grain in different soils and situations, near the borders of the lake where he

---

\* Matt. vi. 26, 28.

preached from a ship, served to illustrate the various successes of the word of God according to the temper and disposition of the heart that received it.\* The sight of a vine spreading forth its branches gave occasion, as seems probable, to a discourse of the vital union between himself and the faithful.† When he called fishermen to forsake their nets and follow him, he promised to make them fishers of men.‡ He likened the perverseness of the Jews, who found equal fault with the retired austerity of the Baptist and his own freer converse with mankind, to the froward and sullen humor of those children whom no endeavors of their companions could please and invite to join with them. He resembled the solicitude of Heaven for the conversion of sinners and the joy of angels on their repentance, to a woman lighting a candle and sweeping her house in search after her lost piece of silver, and when she had found it calling her neighbors about her to rejoice with her.

If some of these images are borrowed from things low and trivial in themselves, yet he stoops without meanness in using them. \*\*\* Others of his allusions are of a higher strain: as when from the sun just risen, and shining with splendor on the gilded turrets and ornaments of the temple where he was discoursing, he referred to the prophecies which speak of him as the light, the east, or sun-rising;|| and said, 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life'.¶ When he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead,

\* Matt. xiii.

† John xv. 1-6.

‡ Matt. iv. 19

§ Luke xv. 8-10. || Isai. ix. 2. compare Matt. iv. 16. Luke i. 78. Malachi, iv. 2. ¶ John viii. 12.

looking forward to the hour in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth, he said, 'I am the resurrection, and the life.'\*

Such passages may strike us as sublime. But we shall still find that it is the thing itself, not any parade or pomp of words, that strikes us. The ancient prophets, when heavenly objects were presented to their minds, were struck with awe and as it were bowed themselves down before the majesty of the idea; and then, in representing it to others, endeavored to clothe it in a gorgeous robe and to deck it out with all the riches and splendor of language. But it is not so that Christ speaks of these high arguments. The perceptions, that astonished the imagination of man, were to his heavenly mind common and familiar objects, and he spake of them accordingly with a certain unconcern and simplicity of phrase.

Another thing observable in his method is the use of parables; in which he often seems to accommodate his instructions to the relish of an eastern people, who delighted in figurative and allegorical compositions. By this method of teaching he excited their attention, and interested their taste and affections in the cause of the truth he was inculcating. He composed his parables with a clear and natural analogy of the representation to the thing represented; and frequently concluded them with a short sentence declaring their main scope and design. Yet still there was something meant in them that was not literally expressed; which met the understanding of the hearer, though so clearly that he could not mistake, yet

---

\* John xi. 25.

so gently that he considered himself as a discoverer and interpreter of it; and thus was led to embrace and cherish the holy moral, as seemingly the child of his own ingenuity.

But though our Lord followed their sages in the use of parables, he did it with a moderation and dignity becoming his character. No beasts of the field or fowls of the air, no trees of the wood debate and confer together with the reason and speech of mankind. No emblematical persons, as the different families of virtue and vice, are introduced opposing each other and influencing the counsels and actions of men. All is built upon nature and life, and the reality of things ; and composed of circumstances which every one perceived might probably happen. Once only, in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, the scene is laid beyond this visible world.

Yet it is to be observed, that though our Lord's moral parables were thus plain, all were not equally perspicuous to the first hearers. He veiled the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven with a certain degree of present obscurity, for the punishment of the obdurate and unbelieving,\* but in condescension also to the weak and infirm;† and with such a temperament, that they who had ears to hear might still be edified : as for instance, by the parable of the father receiving back his prodigal son.‡ For this son was not only the repenting individual, but the gentile world converted and reconciled to God. They had long strayed from their Heavenly Father, and wasted what he had

---

\* Matt. xiii. 13—15. † Mark iv. 33. ‡ Luke xv. 11—32.

distributed to them, reason, conscience and the primitive religion of mankind, by spiritual fornication and sensual impurities ; but at length would come to themselves, be humbled before him, pardoned by him, and restored to the same degree of favor as the elder brother, the Israelite. This was an event, the notion of which that elder brother was then too much blinded with prejudice to endure. It was therefore veiled in a parable, but in a parable of immediate use and edification. Though in the book of Grace, as in the book of Nature, are treasures of wisdom imperfectly known till the appointed time of disclosing them ; yet enough of both is plain and legible at sight to declare the glory of the great Author : as in this parable his goodness and mercy to sinful man are openly proclaimed, as well as mystically predicted.

Our Lord sometimes made his parables a vehicle of reproof ; but with divine gentleness, where charity could hope that offenders might be so reclaimed. The Jews had a strong antipathy to strangers, and narrow notions of the duty of loving our neighbor : for this they are reproved by the parable of the merciful Samaritan\* ; not by direct censure and public accusation of their behaviour towards aliens, but by opposing to it an example of humanity and mercy, which by gaining their admiration might excite them to imitate—an example the more noble and affecting, as the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.†

And we may observe, that where the case did not demand severity, there is a great lenity of supposition

---

\* Luke x. 30—37.  
10\*

† John iv. 9.

in the state of his parables. The wise virgins are as many as the foolish.\* In the parable of the ten talents we find two good and faithful and only one unprofitable servant.† At the maraige feast only one of a large assembly is represented as wanting a wedding garment.‡

If some things, which have here been remarked concerning our Lord's manner, are not imitable by us in the letter, yet from the spirit of them we may learn, That he, who really wishes to instruct, will endeavor to suit the style and illustrations of his subject to the apprehension of his hearers ; will consult their genius ; and study, as did our Lord in the use of parables, to turn their pleasure to their profit : that images taken from very common and familiar things may be so used, as to explain and enliven an argument without debasing the dignity of the doctrine or the character of the speaker : that, if his single aim is to transplant the sense which he himself has of the truth into the breast of his hearers, a graceful unaffected simplicity will often be more commanding and effectual than the most studied and pompous eloquence : that reproofs may come home to the conscience, which are delivered without any pointed severity and in the spirit of meekness : and that charity is as favorable in its suppositions as the case will admit ; and so tempers its zeal to alarm and rouse the wicked, that it may not terrify and dishearten the well-disposed.

---

\* Matt. xxv. 2.      † Matt. xxv. 14—30.      ‡ Matt. xxii. 11.

▲ KNOWLEDGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ILLUSTRATE  
THE BIBLE.

We have been taught the great importance of attending to the peculiar circumstances, in which our sacred books, especially those of the New Testament, were written. The fact itself—that a knowledge of these circumstances is important, and that in proportion to the extent and accuracy of this knowledge will be the ease and pleasure and profit with which we read the Scriptures—this fact would seem too plain to require proof, or to be doubted by any. That such knowledge is indispensable, that it is essential to the strength or soundness of our faith, that we cannot read, understand, believe and obey without it, it were foolish and wrong in the extreme to assert. We know that there is a faith of the heart, borrowing little aid of the understanding, yet as acceptable to God as the clearer convictions of more enlightened and favored believers. We know the Scriptures are read by thousands, who have not and cannot have accurate knowledge of the distinct character or peculiar circumstances of the different books. I believe a very large number in every community are in this condition unavoidably. Yet will any venture to say, that all such are thrown out of the pale of acceptance, or subjected to the loss of all benefit which might be derived from reading the Scriptures? This would be a bold impeachment of God's justice and goodness.

But here is a distinction, obvious enough and yet singularly overlooked sometimes. Because all can-

not obtain that knowledge of which we speak, and therefore it is never to be urged as essential to religious faith or hope; it does not follow, that the faith and hope of all would not be aided by it. Nor does it follow, that it is not the duty of all to obtain as much of this knowledge, and apply it as intelligently and faithfully, as they can. Nor again can it be fairly inferred from these or any proper concessions, that the pleasure and advantage of reading the Scriptures will not in every case be increased by such knowledge, liableness to error be lessened, and the capacity of intellectual and moral improvement greatly enlarged. There is a difference between reading the Bible with a clear conscience, and reading it with a clear understanding. There is a difference between reading it with perfect safety and some satisfaction, and reading it with the highest satisfaction and the greatest improvement. The first, in both respects, all may do, and it is required of all. The last, all cannot do, and it is not required of all. But it is required of all, that they use every opportunity of gaining light as well as peace, and be not content with simply saving themselves from condemnation.

I am aware that these things have been said again and again, and some of them said in this very work. But there are truths which require to be constantly repeated, however trite, until they are heeded and used. Of those we are now considering there is certainly a strange neglect. On one part, people go on from childhood to age reading their Bibles every day, without once thinking that they have anything to do but make out the words and get over a

goodly portion, having not the least suspicion that there are original circumstances, local facts, or any external considerations which they ought to learn, or which would help them if known. On the other part, there are many who ask, how much of these things they ought to know, with an anxiety that betokens a fear for their own security. While beside there appear to be some, not many I believe, who having this knowledge in a high degree look with contempt and distrust on those who have it not. All this is wrong. It is with the use of the Scriptures, as with other parts of religious duty; every one is bound to be not only engaged, but to be as intelligently and profitably engaged as is possible. The degree of profit too will depend on the degree of intelligence, more in this than in the performance of most duties. Every one should feel, that to be an intelligent reader of the Scriptures, while it is an imperious and solemn duty just so far as it is practicable, and none the less a duty from being not common or easy, will bring more surely than anything else security from error, elevated enjoyment, firm and operative faith, and the power of defending as well as of exhibiting this faith.

As an illustration of some of these remarks, and a help to the interpretation of the New Testament, I would now present one of the historical facts by which that interpretation is materially affected.

It relates to the ignorance of the disciples as to the true character of their Master, and the mistake under which they labored, in common with all their countrymen, as to the nature of his kingdom. We

see this continually, and it is one of the valuable evidences of the truth of the history that no attempt is made to conceal it. Not an occasion offers calculated to call out the narrow and mistaken views of the disciples, that we do not see their influence and strength. Although constantly witnessing the miraculous powers of their Lord, and sometimes permitted to exercise these powers themselves, they often betray doubt and distrust. Their asking respecting the few loaves and fishes, ‘what are these among so many,’ and wishing him to send the multitude away empty and fainting, is one of many instances that will occur to every mind. Their pride and unforgiving temper, seen in their desire to call down the vengeance of heaven on those who would not receive them, show how little they then possessed or knew of the true character of the cause they had espoused. And their worldly ambition appears in the request of two of them, through their mother, to be permitted to hold the highest places in the kingdom of Christ.

It is sometimes asked, why our Saviour did not correct these mistakes in his chosen followers and tell them the truth. The answer is, that he did tell them the truth and they would not believe it. He told them that his kingdom was ‘not of this world.’ He told them, that instead of present exaltation and glory, persecution and suffering awaited both him and them; ‘he shewed unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed.’ But they all doubtless felt, as one of them strongly said, ‘Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall

not be unto thee.' How our Lord himself understood this declaration, may be seen in his reply and severe rebuke to Peter. It all shows, that they not only had low and wrong views, but that they clung to these views with wonderful tenacity. They promised indeed to die with their Lord, but when the trial came 'they all forsook him and fled.' His death though so plainly foretold they could not really have expected, for it evidently destroyed all their hopes and almost their interest in his religion. Some of them appear to have gone back immediately to their former occupation and worldly pursuits. Nor would they believe, what had also been plainly predicted by Jesus himself, that he had risen from the dead. It seemed to them an idle tale. And when at last they were compelled to believe it and their hopes revived, they were the very same hopes they had cherished before, relating only to national and temporal glory. In their disappointment at his death they exclaim—'we trusted it had been he, who should have redeemed Israel', showing that they now more than doubted, whether he were in truth the Messiah. And at the very last, in the final interview with him forty days after his resurrection, mistaken and ambitious as ever, they eagerly ask, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?'

This fact in the Gospel history should always be borne in mind in reading and interpreting the New Testament. It will throw light on some difficult passages and help to reconcile some apparent inconsistencies in the conduct of the disciples. It shows that they acted freely and naturally, as most men would

have acted with the same preconceived opinions and in the same outward circumstances, and thus aids the probability of the narrative. Yet more, if you will connect it with the conduct of these same individuals afterwards, see them abandoning these worldly expectations, casting from them all low and sordid motives, acting from high, disinterested, magnanimous considerations, boldly proclaiming their confidence in the truth and spirituality of this religion, and in its defence rushing in the face of poverty, ignominy and death; you can hardly fail to see in it one of the important facts, not enough regarded, illustrating and confirming the truth of our sacred records.

E. B. HALL.

---

#### HISTORY OF ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE.

Soon after his accession to the throne of Great Britain James the First, in consequence of the letters from the Puritan party which assuming a bold tone now demanded a thorough reformation in ecclesiastical affairs, invited four of their leading ministers to a conference at Hampton Court with his new friends the Bishops and Deans of the English Church. On the second day of the conference the Puritan ministers being admitted reduced their demands to four heads—purity of doctrine, a learned ministry, the reformation of the ecclesiastical courts, and the correction of the Book of Common Prayer. The first three did not occasion much debate, but the last was

warmly contested, James himself bearing a part in the discussion. In conclusion the only important matter which the ministers could obtain was that a new translation of the Scriptures should be published. The motion for this is said to have originated with Dr. Reynolds, and James at the time not only expressed himself in its favor, but immediately after the conference entered heartily upon the work.

Before giving an account of the manner in which this translation was executed, it will be well for us to attend to the history and character of the versions that had previously been made for the use of the clergy and people of England, not only because these points involve matters of considerable interest in themselves, but chiefly because the language of King James's translators is expressly this: ‘We never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make a bad one a good one ! but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against ; that hath been our endeavor, that our mark.’

Passing over the uncertain accounts of the labours of Bede, Alfred, and other Saxon translators of Scripture, we come to the times of Wyclif, when better things were unfolded. This great reformer, who lived in the fourteenth century, persuaded that if ever the prejudices which had fastened themselves upon mankind were to be completely loosened it must be by laying the Bible open to the people, had from an early period of his life devoted his various learning and all the powerful energies of

his mind to this purpose; and at length, having used every means that his bold and prolific genius suggested and that his industry could accomplish for creating a longing desire in the people to consult the records of their religion, having applied himself faithfully to the work and availed himself of the assistance of several of his learned followers, he finished and made public in 1380 his translation of the Old and New Testament, which is the first complete English version. Lewis says of this work, ‘It was made from the Latin Bibles then in common use, or which were at that time usually read in the churches. The reason of which seems to have been, not that Wiclif thought the Latin the original or of the same authority with the Hebrew and Greek text, but because he did not understand those languages well enough to translate from them. He likewise chose to translate word for word; as had been done before in the Anglo-Saxon translation, without always observing the idioms or proprieties of the several languages; by which means this translation in such places is not very intelligible to those who do not understand Latin, and we may observe that the words of the original which the Romanists have since termed sacred words and therefore not to be translated are not always thus superstitiously regarded’, [by Wiclif] ‘though at times these foreign words are retained.’

To this testimony we may add, that this version is in general a very pure specimen of the vernacular language of Wiclif’s day; for he appears to have cultivated carefully an acquaintance with this channel, which he saw was so well calculated to convey his own principles and the truths of religion even to the ex-

tremities of society. It circulated widely through the land. Ten years after its appearance its enemies could not carry their bill for its suppression through the House of Lords, and the decree of Archbishop Arundel issued in 1408, forbidding the people to use Wicliif's translation, led the way to great persecutions; for many were the persons who not only paid heavy fines, but underwent long imprisonments, and were even burnt at the stake, because of their refusal to obey such an injunction.

The next English translator of the Scriptures was William Tyndal, a man of integrity and learning, who having imbibed the principles of Luther appears to have made it the labor of his life to have, as he expresses it, the Scriptures plainly laid before the people in their mother tongue, that they might see the process, order, and meaning of the text. Finding no opportunity to execute his intention in England, he sought for greater security and liberty at Antwerp, where he finished his translation of the New Testament with the assistance of John Fry, or Fryth, and William Roye, who were afterwards burnt on the charge of heresy.

After the publication of this translation at Antwerp or Hamburg in 1526, Warham and Tonstall of the English prelacy hurled their censures against the translator and his adherents; and Tonstall in his blind zeal purchased almost all the first impression to prevent its circulation among the people.\* This purchase enabled Tyndal to publish a more correct edi-

\* The correctness of this story has of late been questioned, but it is found in all writers on the subject of this article.

tion. In 1530 he printed at Hamburg his version of the five books of Moses, and in 1531 that of the prophet Jonah, with a prologue full of invective against the Church of Rome. Tyndal continued to translate ; and some writers suppose that he went through the whole Bible with the exception of the Apocrypha. But it is probable that his acknowledged translations are to be confined to those of the historical books and of the prophet Jonah in the Old Testament with the whole of the New. ‘None will deny,’ says Fuller, ‘that many faults needing amendment are found in Tyndal’s translation. His skill in Hebrew was not considerable; the knowledge of languages was then in its infancy; and our English tongue was not improved to its present expressiveness.’ Dr Geddes thinks, that though Tyndal’s is far from being a perfect translation, yet few first translations will be found preferable to it. ‘It is astonishing,’ says this writer in the middle of the last century, ‘how little obsolete the language of it is even at this day: and in point of noble simplicity, propriety of idiom, and purity of style no English version has yet surpassed it.’

In 1535 the whole Bible translated into English came from the press. It is dedicated to the king by Miles Coverdale, who was greatly esteemed for his piety and his knowledge of the Scriptures. In what manner the translation was made we have no information, and the language of the preface on this point is quite obscure. It was called a special translation because it differed from the former English translations. This was probably the first English Bible allowed by royal authority to circulate among the peo-

ple. For Lord Cromwell soon after its appearance published by the King's authority the following, among other injunctions to the clergy. 'That every parson or proprietary of any parish church within the realm should provide a book of the whole Bible, both in Latin and also in English, and lay it up in the choir, for every man that would to look and read therein.'

In 1537, at Hamburgh or some town of Hesse, Grafton and Whitchurch published an edition of the English Bible, which bore the fictitious name of Thomas Matthewe, and was accompanied with the King's most gracious license. It appears to have been the translations of Tyndal and Coverdale thrown together and somewhat altered. Archbishop Cranmer, in his desire to aid the English Church, is well known to have had about this time a new translation of the Scriptures in view, having petitioned the King on the subject and made other preparations; and is supposed to have been the patron and director of this version, having it published on the continent to avoid his enemies of the Catholic party, and employing John Rogers to superintend the work, since that martyr is styled in the sentence passed against him 'John Rogers, alias Matthewe.' At all events Cranmer presented a copy of this Bible to Lord Cromwell, and desired his intercession with the King for his royal license that it might be purchased and used by all. And it was wonderful, says Strype, 'to see with what joy this book of God was received, not only among the more learned and those who were noted lovers of the reformation, but generally all over England among

all the common people; and with what readiness God's word was read and what resort there was to the places appointed for reading it. Every one that could bought the book, and busily read it or heard it read; and many elderly persons learnt to read on purpose.'

Several editions of Matthewe's Bible, more or less revised and altered appeared prior to 1541. The ascendancy of the Catholic party during the last years of Henry's reign retarded the progress of this good work, which advanced rapidly again under Edward VI, in whose short reign of less than seven years and six months eleven impressions of the whole English Bible were published and six of the English New Testament. It is worthy of notice that the Bibles were reprinted according to the preceding editions, whether Tyndal's, Coverdale's, Matthewe's, or the most celebrated revised editions of Matthewe's, no particular preference being shown to any one of these as a standard version,—the reformers seeming more intent on gratifying the tastes of all readers, than fearful of perplexing them by slight variations, when the great outlines were the same.

During the reign of the intolerant Mary many of Reformers fled for refuge to Geneva, where they published in 1557 an English New Testament, the first in our language which contained the distinction of verses by numerals, after the general manner of the Greek Testament published by Robert Stephens six years before. The Psalms by the same editors followed in 1559, dedicated to Elizabeth who had just ascended the British throne. And in 1560 several

of the refugees who had staid at Geneva solely for this purpose, among whom were Bishop Coverdale, John Knox and other eminent men, published their translation of the whole Bible. This, which was mostly used in private families on account of the notes, maps, &c. which accompanied it, ran through thirty editions before 1616. Dr Geddes gives an honorable testimony to this Geneva version, as it is called, and thinks it in general better than that of King James's translators.

In 1568 the Bishops' Bible was finished in England under the care of Archbishop Parker. Distinct portions of the Scriptures had been allotted to select men of learning and abilities, eight of whom were bishops. Other critics were also employed to compare this Bible with the original languages and former translations, one of whom was Lawrence, a celebrated Greek scholar, whose corrections the Bishops' Bible followed exactly. The particular instructions given by the Archbishop to his translators are unfortunately lost, though supposed by some to have been the same afterwards given to King James's translators. The views of the worthy prelate given in his preface to the work were very correct, and are worthy the attention of any translator of the Scriptures. The testimony of those who have examined this version is quite decided in its favor. It appears to have avoided many of the corruptions which from various sources had crept into the original text, and there is little doubt that it was executed on principles of interpretation more free and correct than those on which our common version was made.

An English Bible by the refugee Catholics was published on the continent; the New Testament near the close of the sixteenth century, the Old Testament about thirty years after, the former at Rheims, and the latter at Douay in France. They used the text of the Latin Vulgate, but left many Eastern, Greek, and Latin words untranslated, so that Fuller quaintly calls their work ‘a translation which needed to be translated.’ New editions of this version have been within a few years printed in Great Britain, and the work is commonly known in this country as the Doway Bible.

We now return to the reign of James I. In the course of the year in which the Hampton Court conference was held, the King commissioned fifty-four learned men of the two Universities and other places to make a new and more correct translation of the Bible. They received a long list of regulations, the most important of which I will quote. 1. As to the character of the translation. ‘The Bishops’ Bible to be followed, and as little altered as the original will permit.’ ‘Tyndal’s, Matthewe’s, Coverdale’s, Whitchurch’s, and the Geneva Bible to be followed when they agree better with the text.’ ‘Proper names to be retained as near as may be according to common usage.’ ‘Old ecclesiastical words, as church, &c. to be retained.’ ‘Of divers significations of any word that to be followed which hath been most commonly used by the most eminent Fathers, being agreeable to the propriety of the place and the analogy of faith.’ 2. As to the manner of conducting the work. Every man of each company to take the same portion,

and having translated or amended it by himself, all to meet together, confer what they have done, and agree what shall stand.' 'When a company has finished any book in this way, they shall send it to the other companies to be considered seriously and judiciously.' 'If any company on such review shall doubt or differ on any places, they shall confer in writing, and if not previously settled the difference shall be compounded at the general meeting of the chief persons of each company at the end of the work.' 'When any places of special obscurity shall occur, the judgment of any learned man in the land to be procured thereon. And all persons who have attended to such subjects to be invited to send their observations to Westminster, Cambridge, or Oxford.'

Such directions are well enough in themselves; but we can expect little good to result from following them when we reflect on the insufficiency of the critical rules, if critical rules they can be called, which accompany them. As the case is I only refer to them as matters of historical information. Though the translators were directed to set about their work immediately,—the royal mind, (according to one of the letters of the Bishop of London on the subject,) rejoicing more in the good hope of the success of this undertaking than for the peace concluded with Spain,—they appear to have wasted the first two years in inaction; and when they began to translate in 1606, their number was reduced by death to forty-seven, who were divided into six classes and received their respective portions of the text. A class of ten, at Westminster, were to translate from Genesis to 1 Chronicles;

of eight, at Cambridge, from 1 Chronicles to Isaiah; of seven, at Oxford, from Isaiah through the Old Testament; another company of seven at Westminster took the canonical epistles; a second company of eight at Oxford were to translate the four Gospels, the Acts, and the Apocalypse; and to another company of seven at Cambridge were assigned the Apocrypha and the prayer of Manasseh. In about three years these companies finished their task, the progress of which was not a little retarded by the death of Mr Lively, one of the translators, whose skill in the oriental languages had been of great service.

When the whole was thus finished three copies of it,—one from Cambridge, a second from Oxford, and a third from Westminster—were sent to London; where a committee of six chosen from the joint companies began to review and polish it. They met daily for this purpose, and in nine months went through the whole work. Last of all Bilson, Bishop of Winchester, and Dr. Myles Smyth again reviewed the version; and, having prefixed arguments to the several books, carried it through the press. It was published in 1611, and from that time has been received as the standard English version, all other translations having soon fallen into disuse, except the Epistles and Gospels in the book of Common Prayer, which were still continued according to the Bishops' Bible till the alteration of the Liturgy in 1661, and the Psalms and Hymns which are to this day retained in the Psalter as in the old version.

C. BARNARD.

## THE BREVITY OF THE GOSPELS.

In the last verse of the last chapter of John's Gospel we read;—‘ And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.’ According to a frequent use of the verb—‘ to do,’ in English as well as in Greek, the sentiment conveyed by these words is that John’s Gospel is far from containing an account of all the miracles and sayings of Christ. The same remark might be made concerning the other evangelists, as each of them has omitted much that was recorded by John, and from all of them we obtain only a partial view of our Lord’s ministry. We have nowhere a full recital of his words and actions. This must be a familiar truth, but it may not have occurred to all readers how little we probably have of what might have been committed to writing.

If we consider for a moment the character of our Saviour’s ministry, we shall perceive that a very small part of what he said has been repeated, and very few of his miracles been mentioned by the evangelists. There is a difference of opinion respecting the length of time that elapsed between his baptism and his death; let us take the lowest estimate, which fixes this period at about fifteen months. During this time our Saviour must have delivered many discourses to the multitudes who as he went from place to place surrounded or followed him, must often have been engaged in repelling the charges or in re-

plying to the questions of his enemies, must have frequently taught his friends in their social interviews, and particularly must have held numerous conversations with his disciples. The circumstances of his situation imposed on him the necessity of continual teaching, the desire of the people to hear united with his own disposition in producing constant employment, and he who said of himself that he came ‘not to do his own will but the will of him who sent him,’ and upon whose private devotion his disciples were compelled to intrude with the excuse—‘all men seek for thee,’ could have had few hours that were not filled with the labors of his ministry. What an idea of the extent to which he exercised his miraculous power does the evangelist give us, when he tells us that ‘they brought unto him all that were diseased and them that were possessed with devils, and he healed many that were sick of divers diseases’, and on a subsequent visit to Capernaum that the press was so great as to oblige the friends of a sick man to let him down through the roof. Yet less than fifty miracles are specifically mentioned throughout the four Gospels, and of all the others which he wrought notice is taken in such general expressions as those just quoted. Nothing in the writings of either Matthew, Mark or Luke indicates regret at the brevity of the narrative, or at the omission of important circumstances; yet John’s Gospel contains much valuable matter which is given only by him, and at the close of his narrative it is stated by him or by some one competent to make the assertion, that ‘Jesus did many other things.’ Any one who remembers the public

discourses or the conversations with the twelve, which are recorded by John alone, will perceive how much we should have lost if he had not written. Who can doubt that Jesus again and again spent hours in communicating to his disciples the principles and spirit of his religion? How little do we know of the manner in which he lived with the apostles. How scanty is the information concerning his private life. The slightest examination will convince any one that but a small part of the works and words of Christ has been preserved.

In attempting to explain this circumstance, I might observe that we must not judge that age or people by the standard of present customs, for what is common with us might have seemed strange then.—But a more important consideration is, that the preachers of Christianity were too much occupied by their active duties to spend time in writing. They went from house to house, from city to city, from country to country; their labors were incessant, their lives were in peril; and under such circumstances they could hardly rest long enough to compose a history of their Master's life. Presumptive evidence of this may be seen in the fact, that of the genuine Gospels two only were written by apostles.—It should further be considered, that they whom Jesus chose to this high office were not scholars nor men of education, but fishermen, publicans, and others, whose previous habits of life incapacitated them for the service of authors. They were suited to be, and were meant to be missionaries, and not writers.—Another circumstance worthy of particular notice is, that in

that age printing was unknown. Copies of every work were multiplied by the slow art of the amanuensis or scribe.—Books too were more costly. The object of the evangelists was to enlighten the world, to communicate a knowledge of facts in which all mankind were concerned to the poor and the illiterate; it was therefore necessary, that their histories might be either circulated or read, that they should be brief.

A circumstance attending our Lord's preaching is also to be taken into view. A vast amount must have been repetition; *must* have been, as both the character and the variety of his audiences, and the nature of his religion, required the frequent exhibition of the same truths. They were few and to us appear simple, but they were too simple, too spiritual to be at once embraced by the Jewish mind. They could not be understood, much less adopted, at once by those whose notions were so adverse to the doctrine inculcated by Jesus Christ. They were therefore repeated with various illustrations, presented under different lights, and enforced by new arguments. Besides which, Jesus did not tarry long in one place. We have one of the rules which he observed in his mission, in his reply to some of the apostles who urged him to return to the anxious multitude; ‘Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for therefore came I forth.’ In these towns he preached the same gospel as in Capernaum, in we may presume nearly the same language. And if a difference be noticed between his conversations in the temple and his discourses in Galilee, it arose from

a regard to the different situation or state of mind of his hearers.

It is also important to observe, that the evangelists seem not to have thought that they were writing for future ages. Their minds were employed on the wants of their own period. They found that false stories were gaining credence, by which the beautiful simplicity of their Master's character was injured and the genuineness of his miracles invalidated, through a connexion with absurd fables; they also perceived that the increase of believers rendered it impossible that they should all have personal communication with the apostles and 'eye-witnesses' of the Lord; and under these circumstances they saw that they might render a service to Christianity by preparing a sketch of Christ's manner of life and preaching. They looked on their contemporaries, particularly those who without having been attendants on their Lord's ministry had taken on themselves the office of teachers or catechists in the Church. For them they prepared what might be considered text books, in which the principal events in the Saviour's ministry were exhibited, the traits of his character manifested, and the essential truths of his revelation presented. Much was left to the previous knowledge of the readers, that they might fill up the sketch or complete the narrative. The construction and language, the general air (if the expression may be allowed) of the evangelical histories show that this was their purpose. And this correspondence to the immediate circumstances of the writers affords an argument of great weight in favor of the genuineness of the Gospels.

The surprise which may at first be felt upon comparing the little that is recorded of Jesus Christ,—amounting when digested and harmonized from the four Gospels to no more than a small pamphlet—with all that he must have said and done during his ministry, will be lessened by such a consideration of the nature of his ministry, the circumstances of the time, and the situation and purpose of the writers. I will add one farther remark. Although so much of our Lord's history is unknown to us, yet our loss is not as great as it may at first seem. The proof of the divinity of his religion is abundant, and would not be stronger if volumes were filled with accounts of his wonderful works. The possession of miraculous power is evidence of divine authority—and to this end one miracle is as conclusive as a thousand. Our present Gospels present such a number and variety of these works as must more than satisfy any fair inquirer, while the circumstances are detailed with sufficient minuteness to show the impossibility of artifice or collusion. In regard likewise to the doctrines which our Saviour taught, we have enough for the foundation and guide of our hope. In his precepts too, as we read them, we find what is suited to various exigencies and to various kinds of character. Yet more, the spirit of our religion breathes from every page, and this spirit in our hearts is sanctification and hope. A model of excellence, in fine, is offered to us in these writings, in the character of him whom they describe. The evangelical narratives contain ample instruction for all who will use them. We have here the substance of Christian-

ity, its form and its spirit. Some of the drapery may have perished in the tomb of ages, but the truth of which Jesus was the teacher and the martyr, the faith of which he is the beginning and the end, is in our possession, neither disguised nor mutilated, but entire in its own heavenly beauty.

---

## A GOOD RULE IN READING THE BIBLE.

It would be a good rule to observe in reading the Bible, to disregard as much as possible the division into chapters and verses. This division is entirely arbitrary and often injurious, separating what should remain in close connexion, and rendering obscure what if left in its original state would have been plain. This remark is true of the chapters, but is still more important in its application to the verses, as these not only occur more frequently, but seem to have been introduced in most cases without any regard to the sense or connexion of the passage. In the Epistles this evil is felt more than in any other part of the Bible, because, from the nature of the composition and particularly from the character of the apostolic letters, any division not founded on an understanding of the writer's purpose and plan must only disfigure and darken his work. The Epistles contain elaborate argument, the force of which is lost by a distribution into independent propositions ; they abound in the language of strong feeling, which should not be weakened by an artificial arrangement.

Our sacred books were originally written even without a division into sentences or words, but in a continuous succession of letters. This was one inconvenience. We have gone to the opposite extreme. In reading we should if possible overlook these interruptions of the sense, and should make those divisions both into larger and into smaller paragraphs which appear to us to be demanded by the sense.

A copy of the Bible, in which the chapters and verses were noted in the margin but not separated from one another in the text, would be preferable to those in common use. Two editions of the New Testament printed in this manner have been lately published in Boston. One is the common version reprinted exactly according to the usual text, but not broken up into these hurtful divisions. It was first printed in octavo, but a cheaper edition that costs little more than a common Testament was published the last summer. The other edition is 'the common version, conformed to Griesbach's standard Greek text,' i. e. the common translation is altered only in those places in which Griesbach, who published a more accurate Greek Testament than any one before him, amended the errors of the copies from which the version which we use was made. This book has, therefore, a double claim for preference over the common editions of the English New Testament—that it was prepared from a more correct Greek text, and that it is not injured by a servile regard to the chapters and verses. It has been printed both in octavo and in a smaller and less expensive form.

In using our common Bibles we may by a little effort learn to disregard a division, which is useful only

for the purposes of reference. We can read 'right on' or pause in the midst of one of these sections, as shall seem to us most accordant with the meaning of the writer; and when we have learned thus to read the Bible, we shall find it a yet more pleasant and instructive book than it is now.

---

## TRANSLATION AND EXPOSITION.

MATTHEW IV. 12—25.

*Christ's First Preaching in Galilee.*

12 Now Jesus, having heard that John was in prison, returned into Galilee ; and having left Nazareth, went to reside at Capernaum upon the Sea, <sup>14</sup>within the bounds of Zebulon and Naphtali. So that the words of Isaiah the prophet were fulfilled,  
15 The land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, along the Sea, near the Jordan, Galilee of the  
16 Gentiles, the people sitting in darkness saw a great light, and upon those sitting in the region and shadow of death light arose. At that time Jesus began to preach, saying, Reform, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

18 And as he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a seine into the  
19 Sea ; (for they were fishermen.) And he says to them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of  
20 men. And immediately leaving their nets they

**21** followed him. And going on thence, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in a vessel with their father Zeb-edeē, mending their nets ; and he called them.

**22** And they immediately leaving the vessel and their father followed him.

**23** And Jesus went over all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good tidings of the kingdom, and healing every disease and eve-

**24** ry malady among the people. And his fame spread through all Syria ; and they brought to him all who were sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, lunatics, and paralytic-  
**25** icks, and he healed them. And great crowds fol-

lowed him, from Galilee and Decapolis and Jeru-

salem and Judea and the region near the Jordan.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES.

The circumstances which Matthew now relates did not occur immediately after our Lord's temptation. An interval of months elapsed, during which Jesus made repeated visits to Jerusalem and taught publicly, as we learn from John's Gospel. The facts recorded in this section are mentioned by Mark, i. 14—20, and also with some farther particulars respecting Christ's preaching in Galilee by Luke, iv. 14—v. 11.

V. 12. An account of John's imprisonment, its occasion and issue, is given by Matthew, xiv. 3—12, by Mark, i. 17—29, and also briefly by Luke, iii. 19, 20.

Christ henceforth made Galilee rather than Judea the scene of his ministry, probably that he might prosecute his work with less interruption from the chief priests and rulers

who were by this time very much excited against him, and that he might collect around him and instruct his disciples, the future apostles of his religion.

V. 13. Jesus had passed his youth with his parents at *Nazareth*, but the reluctance of the inhabitants to acknowledge his divine mission and their treatment of him (for which see Luke iv. 16—30,) induced him to quit the place, and fix his residence at *Capernaum*. Nazareth was situated near the middle of Lower Galilee, northwest of Mount Tabor; Capernaum lay on the northwestern shore of the *Sea of Galilee*.

V. 15, 16. See the article on Divisions of Palestine, particularly pages 104 and 106. The description in verse 15th includes most of the northern part of Palestine, lying west and northwest and north of the *Sea of Galilee*, and along the course of the *Jordan* before it enters the Sea, assigned in the distribution of the land under Joshua to the tribes of *Zebulon* and *Naphtali*, and inhabited in later times particularly in the extreme north by families of heathen or *Gentile* descent. The word rendered in the common version ‘beyond’ admits variety of meaning.

The quotation is from Isaiah ix. 1, 2. The precise words of the prophet are not repeated, but the variation in no degree affects the sense.

‘So that—were fulfilled.’ I have given what I suppose is the proper translation of an expression on which much has been written. The evangelists unquestionably cited passages from the Hebrew Scriptures ‘by way of accommodation,’ or in application to other events than those in view of which they were written. To what extent they carried this practice, and by what principles it was regulated, and what rules we may adopt in distinguishing between such a use of the Old Testament and the accomplishment of prophecy, are questions which may be discussed in some future pages of this work, but would occupy too much space here. The

rendering which I have adopted leaves these questions open as the words of an ancient author may be *fulfilled* in different senses; or if any one think this word has not so broad a signification, he can substitute for it in most if not in all instances, *verified*.

‘*The people*’ is in apposition with Galilee; the people of this *land* were in the darkness of error and sin; the *light of* the gospel rose upon them.

‘*The region and shadow of death*,’ or the region of the shadow of death, a strong but fine figure to describe the moral desolation (as we should say) of the country, or the ignorant and deplorable condition of the people.

V. 17. Jesus had *preached* at Jerusalem, but he now *began* his public ministry in Galilee.

V. 18. ‘*The Sea of Galilee*.’ See page 94.

*Simon* and *Andrew* were already acquainted with Jesus, having seen him soon after his baptism, when John pointed him out to them and Jesus gave to Simon the name of Peter, (John i. 35—42).

‘*Seine*.’ The word in the original is not the same with that which in the 20th verse is rendered ‘nets.’ Many persons earned a subsistence from the fishery of the Sea of Tiberias.

V. 19. You shall draw men into ‘the kingdom of heaven,’ —shall collect from the Jewish and the Gentile world disciples to that faith of which you shall be the apostles. They only partially understood him, supposing that they should be employed to gather adherents around him, but being ignorant that his kingdom was purely spiritual.

V. 21. *James* and *John* may have seen Jesus at Jerusalem, or have heard Simon and his brother speak of him, or have been informed through others of his words and works; he evidently was not a stranger to them.

‘*A vessel*.’ It was not a ‘ship,’ and hardly a ‘vessel,’ which the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee used, but a large kind of boat or bark,

V. 22. They did not attach themselves permanently to Jesus till after this time ; (See Mark iii. 14.) It was their duty to leave every thing at the call of him whom they considered the Messiah or at least a divine messenger.

V. 23. '*Synagogues*' were not known among the Jews till after the Babylonish captivity. The usual services consisted of singing and reading portions of the Law and the Prophets, after which the reader or some one of the congregation either invited or rising of his own will might address the assembly. It was on such occasions that Jesus taught the people, and as the number of synagogues was great and they were much frequented, he chose the best time and place.

'*The good tidings.*' This is the meaning of the word gospel, and in this place is to be preferred ; (See Luke viii. 1).

'*Every disease and every malady ;*' i. e. every kind, not every instance, of sickness and infirmity.

V. 24. '*Syria*' was at this time a province of the Roman Empire, lying on the northwest of Palestine, and therefore contiguous to Galilee and Perea.

'*All who were sick*,'—i. e. the sick of all classes and ages. This is an example of the manner in which *universal* expressions are employed in the Bible.

'*Demoniacs.*' This rendering leaves the question undecided respecting the nature of the evil under which these persons were suffering. On the one side it is supposed that they were actually possessed by evil spirits, and on the other that they were insane persons or madmen, who according to the notions of these times were called demoniacs. An article on this subject would have been given now but for want of room.

V. 24. '*Lunatics*,' or those afflicted with epilepsy.

V. 25. For the situation of these districts of country see pages 106—108.

## PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. How just is the description of Christianity as a light, 'a great light,' which whether it rise upon a people dwelling in the night of heathenism or upon an individual walking in the dark ways of sin, changes the appearance of all things, and awakens joy where had been fear or stupidity. How justly descriptive too of a state of irreligion is the figure adopted from the prophet—'the region and shadow of death', over which death, the extinction of all excellence and enjoyment, seems to have reigned, and even to have thrown the shadow of his own baleful nature.

2. The preaching of Christ was the same with that of his forerunner, calling men to forsake their sins, because the time was near when a spiritual religion would be established, and would gather into the enjoyment of its blessings the pure and the penitent.

3. The promise of Jesus to his apostles was amply redeemed. From the conversion of 'about three thousand souls' at the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost to the last scene of the apostles' labors, they were realizing in abundant measure the fulfilment of their Master's declaration that they should be 'fishers of men.'

4. How active and beneficent was the ministry of Christ. He went about doing good and preaching good tidings. He relieved the suffering, and taught the poor, and called the wicked to repentance. We have not his inspiration nor his miraculous power, yet in our humble spheres we may imitate him by a life of active beneficence.

## TRANSLATION AND EXPOSITION.

MATTHEW V. 1—12.

*The Beatitudes.*

1 And seeing the crowds, he ascended a mountain ; and when he had seated himself, his disciples  
2 came to him ; and opening his mouth he taught  
3 them, saying, Happy the poor in spirit ; for theirs  
4 is the kingdom of heaven. Happy they who  
5 mourn ; for they will be comforted. Happy the  
6 meek ; for they will possess the land. Happy they  
7 who hunger and thirst for righteousness ; for they  
8 will be satisfied. Happy the merciful ; for mercy  
9 will be shown to them. Happy the pure in heart ;  
10 for they will see God. Happy the peacemakers ;  
11 for they will be sons of God. Happy they who  
are persecuted for righteousness' sake ; for theirs is  
12 the kingdom of heaven. Happy are you, since you  
will be reproached and accused, and every evil  
thing will be falsely said against you, on my ac-  
count. Rejoice and exult ; for large is your re-  
ward in heaven ; in the same manner too were the  
teachers before you persecuted.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

The sayings of our Lord recorded in verses 3—12 of this chapter are called ‘the beatitudes’, because each of them begins with the word ‘happy’, the Latin for which is ‘beat-

us.'—Compare Luke vi. 20—26.—This ‘sermon on the mount,’ I suppose, was addressed, not to the multitude, nor to the apostles alone, but to the disciples of Jesus, or those persons who had particularly attached themselves to him under the belief that he was the Messiah. The word is used in this sense in Luke vi. 12, where it is said that Jesus ‘called his *disciples*, and of them chose twelve whom also he named apostles.’ Having by his miracles and public conversations not only excited general interest, but also drawn together a number who were ready to avow their adherence to him in the hope of sharing the honors of his reign; he deems it a proper time to correct their notions respecting the Messiah’s kingdom, and to show them the character of his instructions, in contrast with those which had been delivered by the ‘doctors of the law,’ and the nature of the life to which his followers would be called, in contrast with that course of triumph and glory which they were expecting. He therefore addressed them as Jews by education, and as his disciples by profession. Adopting this as a principle of interpretation, we shall perceive the pertinency of the whole and of the several parts of this admirable discourse. Still, as Jesus spake in the open air and in the presence of an immense multitude, enough was heard by others than those who were the immediate subjects of his teaching, to justify the remark that ‘the people were astonished at his doctrine.’

V. 1. ‘*A mountain.*’ This mountain or hill was near Capernaum, into which city Jesus immediately afterwards entered; it was therefore in Lower Galilee, near the northern shore of the lake of Gennesareth.

‘*Had seated himself.*’ The Jewish Rabbins were accustomed to sit, when they taught their pupils.

‘*His disciples,*’—those who regarded him as the Messiah.

V. 2. ‘*Opening his mouth.*’ These words are pleonastic, or redundant; i. e. they do not add anything to the

meaning of the sentence. Pleonasm is a common figure of speech in the Bible.

V. 3. '*Happy*.' The Greek word should be rendered in this manner rather than according to our common version, as there are other words which are used in the original for 'blessed'.

'*Happy the poor*.' There is no verb in the Greek; and the sententious, forcible style of the original is best retained by omitting it in English.

'*The poor in spirit*';—not the poor-spirited, as we now understand the word, but the humble, they who are not inflated by self-conceit, nor by worldly ambition; such as are called in Proverbs xxix. 23. 'the humble in spirit,' and in Isaiah lxvi. 2. 'the poor and of a contrite spirit.'

'*The kingdom of heaven*',—a participation in the blessings of that spiritual empire which I have come to establish. In other words, not the proud and aspiring but the lowly are the followers of the true Messiah.

V. 4. '*They who mourn*.' It is a question among expositors whether mourning for outward or for inward evil be here intended—sorrow for sin, or distress in view of calamities personal or public. May not both be included, and the character here signified be that of those, who under an experience of trouble and a sense of their own unworthiness derive comfort from the influences and promises of the gospel?

'*Will be comforted*.' Our Lord was not so much making promises as declaring great moral facts, the truth of which depends on their very nature. The English word 'will' therefore expressess his meaning better than 'shall.'

V. 5. '*The meek*',—those whose disposition and deportment towards others are modest, gentle and conciliatory—free alike from arrogance and from resentment. This was a characteristic of Jesus Christ; (See Matt. xi. 29 and xxi. 5.)

*'Possess the land.'* This expression, familiar among the Jews, had its origin in their early history. When the Israelites left Egypt, they were destined to the land of promise, which became in their eyes the seat of every blessing. 'To inherit the land,' became a kind of proverb for the enjoyment of peace and plenty, or a life of great felicity. We find the phrase used in this sense, and in the same connexion as in our Lord's discourse, in Psalm xxxvii. 11; 'The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.' The original word may be translated either 'earth' or 'land,' according to the context. The *meek* enjoy a happiness to which others must be strangers. They have a security and satisfaction, and derive from the circumstances in which they are placed a pleasure, which irritable or haughty tempers cannot enjoy; while at the same time they are less liable to receive provocation and injury.

V. 6. '*Hunger and thirst for righteousness.*' This is a common figure both in sacred and profane writers; and it is finely chosen, as it expresses the intense desire of the soul, which nothing will satisfy but the object of desire. Hunger and thirst are appetites, which if not gratified become occasions of extreme suffering and can be appeased by nothing but their appropriate supplies. The hungry man must have food, the thirsty man drink; so the soul that longs for righteousness, that earnestly desires goodness, holiness, religion, cannot be satisfied with anything else. The Psalmist declares that his 'soul thirsteth for God' (Psalm xlvi. 2); and our Lord speaks of himself as 'the bread of life' (John vi. 35), and of his instruction as 'living water' (John iv. 10); and in John vii. 37 we are told that he said—'if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.'

*'Will be satisfied'.* The experience of the want will impel and guide them to the means of satisfying it. A true desire to know and do the will of God will secure its own end.

V. 7. '*The merciful*';—the compassionate and forgiving, in opposition to the austere and revengeful.

'*Mercy will be shown to them*',—by God, and generally by their fellowmen. Our Lord's parable of the cruel servant (Matt. xviii. 23—35) may be read in connexion with this beatitude.

V. 8. '*Pure in heart*'. Allusion may be intended, by way of contrast, to the outward and ceremonial purity on which the Pharisees insisted, while their hearts were 'full of hypocrisy and iniquity.' Compare Psalm xxiv. 3—5.

'*Will see God*'. Here again a figure is borrowed from the language of the senses, to describe a spiritual condition. To see God, is to know him, to feel his presence, and to enjoy an intimacy with him. The use of the word 'see' to express knowledge, possession and enjoyment, was a familiar Hebraism, (as in Psalm xxxiv. 13 and Heb. xii. 14), and is not unknown among us; as for example we speak of 'seeing the truth'.—A passage is quoted from Origen, an early Christian writer, which is a good comment on this verse. 'God has no body, and therefore is invisible; but men of contemplation can discern him with the heart and understanding. But a defiled heart cannot see God; but he must be pure, who wishes to enjoy a proper view of a pure being.'

V. 9. '*Peacemakers*',—who cultivate in their own hearts and in their intercourse with society a peaceful temper, and who endeavor to prevent or allay those feelings which engender strife and hostility.

'*Will be sons of God*'. The verb 'called' is used by a Hebrew idiom (found however in other languages) for the substantive verb, 'to be'; as in Isaiah ix. 6, and lvi. 7, Matt. v. 19, Luke i. 76, &c.—It was according to another Hebrew idiom, to call those who resembled God or those who were beloved by him, 'sons of God.' This was a common form of speech, to express a particularly near relation, or resem-

blance in character; thus in Psalm lxxxix. 22 we find the expression ‘son of wickedness’, and in Luke x. 6, ‘the son of of peace;’ so Jehovah styles Israel ‘his son, his first-born’ (Exod iv. 22), and the apostle Paul addresses Timothy as his ‘own son’ (1 Tim. i. 2).—God is styled the ‘God of peace;’ (Rom xvi. 20. Phil. iv. 9. Heb. xiii. 20).

V. 10. ‘*Persecuted*;’—in the various ways mentioned in the next verse.

‘*For righteousness’ sake*;’—on account of their adherence to that true religion, which Jesus would introduce in the place whether of Jewish or of heathen superstition and vice

‘*Theirs is the kingdom of heaven*;’—they are the true disciples of the Messiah, and will enjoy the blessings which he came to bestow and reveal.

V. 11. ‘*Happy are you &c.*’ The sentiment of the preceding clause is here applied directly to the disciples of Christ; and is expanded by the enumeration of instances of persecution. ‘*Accused*’ probably refers to proceedings in the courts of justice. ‘*On my account*’ i. e. on account of your profession and constancy as my disciples.

We have no idiom like that of the original in this verse, by which the active form of the verb with the pronoun of the third person is used instead of the passive verb. The French have a similar form of speech—‘*on vous persecutera*’ &c.

Mark the force of the word ‘*falsely*’ here. They who are unjustly accused and vilified, not those who disgrace their profession by their crimes, are pronounced happy. The exhortation of the apostle Peter (1 Epist. iv. 12—16) may be taken as a paraphrase of this verse.

V. 12. The Greek word, which in the third as well as in the second clause of this verse King James’s translators rendered ‘*for*,’ is often only a word of transition or connexion, and does not in such cases express a reason or cause, in the manner of the English conjunction. It should then

be rendered only by a connective particle, and sometimes may be omitted in the translation.

*'Teachers.'* The authors of our common version seem to have been guided rather by the sound than the sense of the Greek word which they translate 'prophets.' In some instances the context shows that this is its proper meaning; but generally it signifies 'an inspired teacher,' without determining his instructions to be prophetic in their character. Such, I conceive, is the meaning in this verse; but as the larger term includes the less, the prophets of the Old Testament are embraced in the remark of our Lord. See similar declarations in Matt. xxiii. 29—31; Acts vii. 52; 1 Thess. ii. 15; James v. 10.

## PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. We cannot but observe the independence and frankness which distinguish this even more than other parts of our Lord's teaching, and which only he who felt at once the responsibility and the support of delivering divine truth would have exhibited. His language, too plain to be misunderstood and too decisive to be misconstrued, was directly opposed to the hopes and persuasions of his hearers. They had been taught in a different school, their conceptions of his character and office were formed on another model, their adherence to him was associated with views of a totally different nature. Yet he boldly corrected their errors, rebuked their ambition, and in the place of the conquest and glory which they were expecting offered them the duties of humility and self denial and the experience of relentless persecution; nay, he assured them that his dis-

ciples must account themselves happy in the possession of that character and in exposure to those trials to which their own feelings were most adverse. Such an open and resolute tone of instruction, while it illustrates the character of Jesus, is likewise a proof that he was conscious of a divine inspiration. For a more full illustration of this subject, see the next article.

2. In the beatitudes Jesus Christ addressed himself to that sentiment, which in the mind not of a Jew alone but of every human being is most impatient for satisfaction—the desire of happiness. It is the first and the constant demand of the soul, and our blessed Lord has taught the only true way of relieving this want of our nature. And what is the sum of his instruction? It consists in pointing us not to outward circumstances, from which men had been and still are accustomed to look for happiness, but to the soul itself—to the dispositions and character. He simply unfolds the everlasting principles of moral existence. As if he had said, Be humble, benevolent and pure; this it is to be happy.

3. The character which our Master has described as that of his true disciples is singularly unlike that, which is now encouraged and sought by the multitude even of the Christian world. Compare the features which he has drawn with those which we meet in the intercourse of society, or with those which a faithful self examination must show us in ourselves, and what a difference must we perceive. The humble and lowly, the thoughtful and penitent, the mild and forgiving, they in whom the love of goodness is the habitual and

supreme desire, the compassionate and beneficent, the pure in motive and feeling, the lovers of concord, such are the men whom Christ declares to be happy; and the world overflows with unhappiness, simply because it abounds in persons of opposite dispositions and habits.

4. Christianity has so far effected a revolution in the sentiments of mankind, that we may not be ‘persecuted for righteousness’ sake.’ But if we should incur suspicion or hostility by our stedfastness in the cause of truth, or by the expression, whether from our lips or in our lives, of those principles which Jesus inculcated, we may comfort ourselves with the thought that ‘the teachers before us’ were persecuted in a far more violent manner. The Christian should not court opposition nor affect eccentricity; but if in a conscientious discharge of duty he offend the prejudices of others, and bring on himself censure and hatred, so long as the evil is falsely said against him, he should not permit it to disturb him, for ‘large his reward in heaven.’

---

THE BEATITUDES.

The spectacle of Jesus travelling through Judea attended by a vast concourse of people, as it rises before the imagination, has something in it unspeakably grand and affecting. There is always something sublime in the sight of an immense mul-

titude. But in the present case there are considerations that enhance the effect immeasurably. In the midst of that dark and living mass moving along the highway and growing every moment larger and larger, exciting the whole country as it advances, we see a young man in the bloom of life. The most magnificent design that can be conceived is the fixed and settled purpose of his bosom. His object is to illuminate the world, to fill the whole earth with knowledge and love and purity and peace, to disclose the true secret of civilization, improvement and happiness. We cannot fail to believe that so grand a thought must have given a simple dignity to his demeanour and a calm serenity to his countenance, which no pencil could pourtray. In his own soul he has solemnly delivered himself up a willing and living sacrifice on the altar of humanity and truth and God. He must be conscious too that he sustains an office to which no other being had ever been called, and a relation to the Infinite and Invisible One of the most peculiar, solemn and responsible character. If you can take off your thoughts from him, look round upon the crowd collected around him and think what visions of earthly glory are breaking upon their view. They are a singular and most remarkable people. Their minds were rich in the pride of ancestral recollections. Their nation, as they believed, had been the peculiar and favorite care of the one living and true God. They could look back to illustrious Kings, to a long line of Prophets who had spoken to them in the name of the Invisible. And now at this period they had

been taught from their very cradles, that a dispensation of unparalleled splendor and power was to be ushered in. A Prince and Conqueror was shortly to appear, sent by God and clad with mighty power, and destined to break asunder the iron yoke of the Roman and to bind that haughty power in chains to his chariot wheels. The wealth of the world was to be poured into Judea. A golden age was about to commence, and Israel was to be lifted up to a summit from which all the glory that the earth had yet witnessed would seem to dwindle into insignificance.

Such were the expectations that were cherished in Judea, when the report spread rapidly over the country that a most extraordinary individual had appeared, proclaiming the approach of the heavenly kingdom and performing works of mercy in the most astonishing manner by his word and by his touch. He had not avowed himself the Messiah. His extraction was lowly, and his garb plain and his whole appearance humble. Still as the rumor of his stupendous acts increased, how must every heart have beaten violently with excited hope! The people quit their abodes, the old and mothers with their children join the crowd, and follow this remarkable man with intense curiosity. We see their countenances flushed with expectation, as if they thought to see the banner of the Mighty One floating in the air. The mother lifts her child above the crowd, that his infant eyes may catch a glimpse of him whom all men begin to suspect is the Hope, the Desire of Israel; and the aged Israelite raises his heart and eyes to the Lord God of his fathers, who has permit-

ted him to live to see the dawning of this glorious day.

This we have every reason to believe is a correct, although a feeble, picture of the scene just before the delivery of the sermon on the Mount. Seeing the multitude, Jesus ascended an eminence where he might speak with the best hope of being heard. He seats himself. By this sign the people know that he is about to teach. His personal followers collect around him. With what intense emotions prepare to listen! How is every head bent forward, and every eye kindled with hope! Perhaps he is going to declare himself. Perhaps the summons to arms and to conquest is just about to issue from his lips; and they are ready to hail him with acclamations. But lo! he speaks; 'Happy are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' By the 'poor in spirit' were meant those who cherish a state of mind the opposite of pride and of a selfish thirst for glory. And in that large multitude inflamed by earthly hopes and passions was there one, except Jesus, who could be thus designated as 'poor in spirit?' Was there one, who was not disturbed and perplexed by these first words that fell from the lips of Jesus? 'The kingdom of heaven,' they imagined, was to belong to the brave, the mighty and honorable. What means this saying then, that the humble and lowly minded are to be the true heirs and possessors of the heavenly kingdom? How directly opposed to their views and expectations was this declaration of Jesus. It reveals to us however the idea which he cherished of 'the kingdom of heaven.' It shows us that he understood

it as a dominion inward, simple and spiritual. It is in his view a moral empire, the only empire that deserves to be called heavenly and divine. And we may observe, that it was no arbitrary blessing or privilege of which Jesus spake as belonging to 'the poor in spirit.' From the very nature of things, a mind divested of earthly passions, unincumbered by selfish and sordid hopes of worldly glory, free from coarse ambition and pride, does indeed possess a heavenly kingdom in its own purity, in the strength of its own affections unfettered by selfish thoughts, in the power of its own faculties, in the serenity of its own consciousness. Our Saviour therefore simply states a literal truth, but a great truth—a great moral revelation. The world had all along regarded martial virtue, a warlike temper of mind as the pledge of true distinction and power. But Jesus insists upon the opposite. 'Happy are the poor in spirit,' those whose strength is not impaired by selfish considerations, who are ready to endure for the sake of being good and doing good; for theirs is the true kingdom, theirs is the loftiest throne, the mightiest authority.

'Happy are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Charged as Jesus was with the care and establishment of those truths, which explain the mysteries of life and reveal in all the evils of man's condition the agency of a paternal hand, well did he say 'Happy are they who mourn.' Comfort, glorious comfort was at hand. Life and immortality were about to be fully confirmed. The prosperous and happy would probably remain careless and indifferent, but the mourner seeking for comfort was about to have

opened to him springs of inexhaustible consolation.

‘Happy are the meek, for they shall possess the land.’ The auditors of Jesus were familiar with this language, for it was borrowed from their own Scriptures. And yet we may well suppose, that it must have damped the confidence of their expectations and led them to doubt whether Jesus were the Messiah, to hear him using such peaceful language and extolling such lowly virtues. This was not the style of a conqueror. Here was nothing to encourage them to prepare for battle. Our Saviour may be understood as saying, that the meek are happy because they have the prospect of the highest earthly felicity. The meek are at peace in themselves, and being possessed of inward tranquillity are consequently best prepared to enjoy all the external, outward, earthly sources of happiness. So this passage appears to be almost literally true. It has all along been supposed that the possession of the earth—universal empire can be obtained only by the sterner virtues, by inordinate ambition and a thirst for conquest impelling the individual to deeds of violence and bloodshed. But in truth it is the meek and gentle virtues, which win and subdue all hearts and fit a man for the perfect and true enjoyment of every earthly blessing, that can most truly be said ‘to possess the land’—‘to inherit the earth.’

The Jews were thirsting after revenge upon their brought oppressors; they were hungering after national glory. And Jesus says, ‘Happy are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness’—after moral goodness, ‘for they shall be filled.’ Here again ob-

serve what a strict and grand truth or fact is enunciated in these words. It is only those who make goodness their supreme object of desire, who are ever filled, satisfied, happy and at peace. Any other object we may hunger after and obtain, but we are not filled. This is the constitution of our nature.

The Jewish multitude were inflamed with the hope of retaliating upon the nations, that had ground them to the dust and dared to flout their pretensions, the injuries they had suffered. It was a bright point in the picture of the coming kingdom, that the Messiah would take signal vengeance upon their enemies. But what says he, who on account of his wonderful works they are almost ready to believe is that illustrious personage? ‘Happy are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.’ Who receives richer tokens of the favor and mercy of Heaven than the man who cherishes a tender and humane heart? There is a happiness in the cultivation of kind affections, which is the most significant assurance of the divine mercy. So it appears that the merciful in the very happiness of their merciful feelings receive mercy or favor.

The Jewish crowd were proud of their external privileges, their descent from Abraham, their distinction as Israelites. Our Lord neglects all these grounds upon which the divine favor was expected. He has not yet uttered a word in accordance with the prejudices of his countrymen. He has only stated, in the most simple and striking manner, the grandest moral truths. He proceeds in the same strain. ‘Happy are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’

Here again we notice the same spirituality of thought. God is invisible to the mortal eye. He can be discerned in all his glory only by those who have a sympathy with goodness, whose thoughts are pure, unengrossed with the objects of sense. The pure, hearted do indeed see God; they see not his power and wisdom only, but his spirit, which is purity, moral perfection. With this they sympathise; and thus they distinguish God.

The Jews expected the Messiah to sound the note of war. But Jesus says, ‘ Happy are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God,’ or, as it may be more properly read, ‘ for they shall be the sons of God.’ You are expecting, he in effect says, that you are to be led out to battle, but I pronounce those happy who seek peace and allay all contention. They are the true sons of God. They are the favored of Heaven.

Happy are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,—on account of their love of goodness, ‘ for to them belongs the kingdom of heaven.’ Here also is a sentiment in direct opposition to the prejudices of the Jews. It must have been no slight mystery to them, how ‘ the kingdom of heaven ’ was to belong to the persecuted, the despised and the oppressed. In that kingdom they fondly hoped that all natural evils would cease, that there would be ease and plenty and health and profound peace and joy. And yet this teacher, upon whom all eyes are fixed—to whom all are listening, pronounces the humble, the lowly and the persecuted, the true and happy possessors of the heavenly kingdom. To us what

truth is now unfolded in the language of Jesus. They who have suffered in the cause of truth and goodness, what a glorious dominion is theirs! How they reign in the hearts of a grateful posterity; and as believers in the doctrine of immortality we discern them living in a higher state and reigning in the affections of myriads of intelligences.

In the next verse the same sentiment is amplified. ‘Happy are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.’ By this language Jesus sought to prepare those who were inclined to adhere to him for trouble and persecution. You are looking for conquest and glory; but I say you will be happy, you will be privileged, if on account of your attachment to righteousness and to me you suffer persecution. You may regard persecution as a proof of the truth and justice of your course, for it has been the lot of the great and good before you. I teach you to consider trials thus endured as pledges of your fitness for the glorious kingdom of heaven, which you are expecting so eagerly. This was a new and strange doctrine to the Jews concerning the reign of the Messiah.

I cannot close these remarks upon the beatitudes, as they are called, without remarking how perfectly simple, beautiful and true is the sentiment which runs through them all. They are, it appears to me, simple statements of grand moral facts. How strik-

ing do they appear in the contrast not only with the coarse and earthly feelings of those in whose presence they were first uttered, but with the apprehensions of this enlightened age. The perfect spirituality of our Lord's language is not yet understood. It cannot be thoroughly understood until we are fully acquainted with his character and deeply impressed with the simplicity of his noble design. When we understand his character, we are prepared, and not until then, to interpret his words with some hope of approximating to the elevation of their meaning.

W. H. FURNESS.

---

#### ARTIFICIAL DIVISIONS OF THE BIBLE.

The division of the Bible into two parts—the Old and the New Testament—may be considered a natural one; as it is founded on the order of time, and on the great events by which a religion designed for the whole world was introduced to take the place of a religion local and temporary, whose ends were then accomplished. The division into books is also natural, as they were written by different men or relate to different subjects; still this division is in some measure arbitrary, as we find that the Jews, for example, reckon the two books of Samuel, the two of Kings, and the two of Chronicles in each case as one book. The Jews adopted a classification of their Scriptures, which though universally

regarded had little of propriety to recommend it. They formed three classes, the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiography. ‘The Law’ consisted of the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses. ‘The Prophets’ included the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, which were styled the former prophets, and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and the eleven other writers to the end of the volume, who were called the latter prophets. The ‘Hagiography,’ or Holy Writings (the literal meaning of the word) embraced the rest of the Old Testament; into this class therefore fell the Chronicles which were separated from the previous historical books, and Daniel who was excluded from a place among the ‘Prophets.’ This division was observed in the Saviour’s time, and is noticed by him when he says, ‘that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me, (Luke xxiv. 44); the Psalms which was the first book of the Hagiography being named, according to a familiar practice among the Jews, for the whole class of writings to which that book belonged. The apostle Peter also seems to have had this arrangement of the Scriptures in view, when he speaks of ‘all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after’ (Acts iii. 24).

This distinction between the parts of the Old Testament is not retained by Christians. We however distinguish between the Pentateuch, the Historical Books, and the Prophets, which last portion is subdivided into two parts, the last twelve being often called the ‘minor’ or ‘lesser’ prophets.

Among the Jews still another division has obtained, by which the Law is distributed into both larger and smaller sections, and the Prophets into portions and yet farther into verses. This distribution was intended to regulate the reading of the sacred books in the synagogue on the sabbath; it is not regarded by Christians.

The books of the New Testament were at an early period divided into what might be called sections and clauses; *titles* and *heads* were the Greek names given them. This division continued till the introduction of our present chapters, for which we are indebted, if any thanks be due to the author of this invention, to a Cardinal Hugo, who about the middle of the 13th century prepared a Concordance to the Bible; in making which he found it necessary to adopt both the division into chapters, which has been followed to this day, and a subdivision of the chapters into sections, which we have laid aside as less convenient than the use of verses. This last practice however originated in the subdivision made by Hugo, whose arrangement was partially adopted by a Jewish Rabbi in the middle of the 15th century, and was reduced to its present state in the Old Testament by a Jew of Amsterdam in an edition of the Hebrew Scriptures printed in 1661. Just a hundred years before this last date, Robert Stephens, a celebrated printer of Paris, published the New Testament in Greek with our present verses. ‘The wild and indigested invention of the learned printer,’ says Michaelis, ‘was soon introduced into all editions of the New Testament; and it must be confessed, that

in quoting and consulting the Bible there is great use in the division into verses. But the interpretation of this sacred book has suffered greatly by this division. For, not to mention that Stephens often ends a verse at the wrong place against the sense of the passage, the division itself is quite contrary to the nature of the Epistles, which are connected; whereas separate verses appear to the eyes of the learned and to the minds of the unlearned as so many detached sentences. Hence arose the custom of explaining each verse separately, which has sometimes produced a very false interpretation.'

---

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS VI. 1—10.

I intend in the first place to enter into a detailed and particular explanation of this passage, and then to draw from it one or two obvious inferences. I select it rather, because it contains several phrases which are somewhat obscure, and perhaps are not very definitely understood, and which at the same time, occur rather frequently in the writings of Paul. It is a more common fault, I suspect, than we are aware of, to affix no definite meaning to the words of Scripture; and many a fluent reader might be confounded on the simplest passage, by Philip's inquiry, 'understandest thou what thou readest?' This is particularly true of St Paul's writings, 'in which are some things hard to be understood.'

In the interpretation which I propose, I shall sometimes take the liberty with the common translation, of proposing language more intelligible and fitted more exactly to convey the thought. I will now proceed to the passage.

The preceding chapter furnishes the occasion of the objection, with which this commences. The apostle had been treating of the great doctrine of justification by faith, i. e. the doctrine of receiving favors through the mercy of God, without the works of law. In this way of justification, or of being treated as though we were just, he declares that 'where sin did abound grace did much more abound.' He then introduces an objection to his doctrine, founded on the charge of licentiousness, inasmuch as the expectation of gratuitous and unlimited pardon would encourage the subjects of it to continue in sin.—'What shall we say, then?' This is the usual form of expression by which Paul introduces an objection, and it may be more justly rendered in the present tense, What do we say then? Do we say this by our doctrine,—let us continue in sin that grace may abound—may be magnified in our pardon? The apostle replies by the strongest negation—'God forbid', i. e. by no means, let it not be so; (which is the force of the phrase, commonly rendered, God forbid;) how shall we who are spiritually dead to sin, who have laid it aside as the deceased have the things of this life—who are freed from it, how shall we any longer indulge and practise it? This use of the phrase 'to be dead to anything or person,' is found in the ancient profane writers.

Some commentators render this passage thus; how shall we who have been made miserable by sin be devoted to it, or to its service. The context and the usage of a writer are the first laws of interpretation, and these are both in favor of the former explanation of the words ‘dead to sin.’ As to the preceding context, this meaning is a better answer than the other to the objection. It is more to the apostle’s purpose to reason against the objection, that the grace by which believers are justified leads to licentiousness, from the absurdity of supposing that those who are freed from the power of sin any longer practise it; than to reason from the regard which believers, in common with other men, have to their own happiness, that they will not continue in sin. As to the subsequent context, I believe it is admitted by all that it treats of freedom from sin. With regard to the usage of the writer; it is easy to bring examples from this apostle of the same form of expression, used in the same sense which our translators have affixed to the phrase in question. In Romans vii, 4, we have the expression, ‘dead to the law’—as the woman was dead to the obligation of the marriage contract after the decease of her husband, i. e. freed from it. In Galatians ii. 19.—‘dead to the law that I might live to God.’ The law of which the apostle speaks is the law of Moses—the ceremonial law. To this, he says, I am dead—i. e. I do not observe it—I am released from it. ‘For ye are dead,’ says the apostle again, ‘and your life is hid with Christ in God.’ Not, ye are wretched, and your life is hid,’ &c. The 7th verse of this chapter,

where the same phrase occurs, it is believed explains the sense in which the apostle uses it in this passage:—‘ he that is dead, is freed from sin.’

The general proposition, then, contained in this reply, viz. that Christians are freed from the reigning power of sin and therefore live a new life, is illustrated in the remaining verses of the passage under consideration, by various similitudes taken from the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Christ. In the latter verse, the apostle rises from the bare assertion of the believer’s freedom and renovation, to the assurance that he will persevere in these and will attain to eternal life. We will now consider the subsequent verses in their order.

Verse 3. ‘ Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptised into his death?’ Baptism was the appointed sign of a profession or adoption of the Christian religion. To be baptized into a person, is to profess submission and adherence to him in his assumed character. So the Israelites are said ‘ to have been baptized into Moses.’ To be baptized into the death of Christ, is to acknowledge the truths and obligations involved in it. The grand truth involved was, that Christ died for our sins, and the duty—what the apostle deduces in another place—‘ that we should henceforth not live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us.’ The import of the passage then is this. Are ye ignorant that as many of us as have professed the religion of Christ, have professed our belief that he died for our sins? Therefore we will die to all sin, in imitation of his death, is the dictate of every

christian feeling, and a conclusion which the apostle urges on his brethren in the 11th verse.

He goes on to show the reality of such a similitude in the next verse. We have professed our belief that Christ died for our sins, and therefore we die to sin, or are freed from it; (which is the force of the 3d verse; then verse 4th;) ‘so that we are buried with him by baptism into death; the consequence is, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the power of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.’ The particle rendered, ‘that,’ in this verse does not indicate the object—the purpose, but it expresses the consequence —what will follow. ‘We are buried with him by baptism’, not to the end that we may rise to a new life, as our translation implies; but, ‘the consequence is,’ or it comes to pass, ‘that we rise to a new life’. So it is said in the Gospels, that certain events took place ‘that it might be fulfilled’, i. e. so that it came to pass that it was fulfilled. Our common translation proceeds,—‘As Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.’ The Hebrew word rendered glory to which the Greek word in this verse corresponds is in several passages rendered strength or power. ‘Raised by the power of the Father,’ would then probably be a more exact translation. ‘In newness of life’, is a common Hebrew idiom for,—in a new life. The phrase ‘buried by baptism’ is probably taken from the mode of baptism by immersion, which was commonly though not invariably practised in early times. Immersion would represent a relinquishment of the former sin-

ful life; and rising from the water, the rising to ‘newness of life.’ Paul expresses both these ideas under the same figure in Colossians ii. 12. ‘Buried with him in baptism, wherein ye are also risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God.’

Verse 5th. ‘For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.’ Our translators have given the word which they render ‘planted together’ its original meaning. To be ‘planted together,’ by a metaphorical use signifies participation, or what is common to two persons or things. In this sense it is used in the passage before us. If death has been common to us with him, i. e. if we have died in respect to the power of sin, as he died in respect to natural life, we shall rise to a spiritual life, in a figurative participation of his resurrection.

Verse 6th. ‘Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.’ Being ‘crucified with Christ,’ expresses by a different figure the same idea as being ‘planted with him.’ ‘The old man,’ means former sinful inclinations. Thus it is used in Ephesians iv. 22. ‘That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.’ ‘The body of sin,’ means the same as ‘the old man.’ It is called the body of sin, according to the common explanation, because a great proportion of the sins of men were supposed to inhere in the body and to flow from it. Perhaps the apostle in this verse advances a little on what he had said before.

He had barely asserted a similitude between Christ and believers. He now says, that the old man—in other words, indwelling sin—is mortified and subdued,—is crucified, i. e. is gradually losing its strength and life, not without pain and sorrow and many struggles, for this very end, that the body of sin, the whole mass of sinful affections, might be destroyed, that we might no longer serve sin but live a new and holy life.

Verse 7th. ‘For he that is dead is freed from sin,’ i. e. literally dead. Any other sense would be nugatory or false. In the sense of being freed from sin, it would be nugatory; it would make the apostle say, he that is freed from sin is freed from sin. In the sense of being wretched, it is false; for it is not true, that those who are made wretched by sin are freed from sin. It may be indeed, that the apostle added this verse both for explanation and enforcement;—for explanation, to show, that, as he had used the term ‘dead’, to be ‘dead’ and to be ‘freed from sin’ were one and the same thing. But this rendering of the passage would enforce as well as explain the apostle’s doctrine. Literal death had all along been used to represent spiritual death unto sin. The apostle here seems to resume the literal sense of the word, and to give force and vividness to the truth he had been inculcating, by recalling the mind to the literal meaning of the figure which he had employed to communicate it. The word rendered ‘freed’ in this verse means in its original use, to justify. As the justified were freed from punishment, this word comes to have the meaning of liberate. The con-

text can leave no doubt that our translators have rightly rendered it ‘freed.’

Verses 8th, 9th, and 10th. ‘Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.’ The apostle had contended against the objection at the head of the chapter, on the ground of the absurdity which it involved, viz. that believers who were spiritually dead, i. e. who abhorred and abjured sin, should any longer live in it—should any longer habitually practise it. In these verses he expresses his confident persuasion, (‘we believe,’) that Christians would persevere in a new and holy life, in imitation of him who having arisen from the dead dieth no more; who having died, died once for all, and in that he liveth, liveth to God forever—liveth a divine and endless life: that believers would thus live with Christ, in conformity with his own declaration, ‘because I live ye shall live also.’

I have considered the apostle as arguing against the objection that pardoning grace was licentious, from the absurdity of supposing that those who had denounced and abandoned all sin would indulge in it; and farther, as illustrating this position by similitudes taken from the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. And this is all that appears on the face of the passage. Yet to comprehend the full force and pertinence of Paul’s refutation, it is proper to regard the views and feelings which as a Christian he would

have on the statement of such an objection. The case supposed is this: on the ground of faith, i. e. of free grace, or favor, we have the assurance of pardon. The question is, shall we sin on the strength of this assurance? By no means, is the reply; how shall we, who by the very fact of pardon are laid under the most affecting obligations and the strongest motives of gratitude to abhor all sin; we, in whom the very act of pardon has struck at the root of all sin in our hearts; how shall we live in sin? and that too for the very reason which most of all dissuades us from it! how shall we, who by the privilege and blessedness of that state of justification into which we are brought, by the holy nature of that faith which introduced us into it, by all the views which our faith takes of Christ who died for us and of the inheritance which he has promised; and especially how shall we, who are most graciously pardoned, and by all these considerations are filled with the utmost disrelish and abhorrence of all sin; how shall such persons 'live any longer therein?' Such a reply, it will be allowed, would be more than pertinent; it would triumph on the very ground which the objector had chosen for making his attack. 'You are in a state of acceptance and favor with God,' is the language of the objection; 'faith has procured the pardon which introduces you into this state, and you have no more need of works. You can now sin with impunity.' 'All these considerations make me revolt from your proposal,' is the reply; 'the motives by which you urge me to disobey defeat their aim, and only kindle my indignation at the base suggestion. How

shall sin live on an aliment which destroys it! How shall it grow by a nourishment which is mortal poison!

We turn now to some practical inferences from this passage. Free grace superabounding where sin abounds encourages the subjects of it to sin, and is therefore unfavorable to good works;—this is the objection to Paul's doctrine of gratuitous justification. From his answer to the objection the following inferences among others are manifest.

The free grace of the gospel does not lessen the necessity of good works. A man indeed is not saved on the ground of his good works, but he cannot be saved without them. His good works do not save him as merits, but they do save him as means; that is, although they cannot purchase salvation, they imply or rather they are a habit of the soul which necessarily involves salvation, happiness, heavenly bliss. If the obligation to good works was done away by the free grace of the gospel, Paul must have admitted it; and this would have been taking part with the objector. But he admits no such thing. How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein? Our gospel is not licentious. Everything in it strengthens the obligations to holiness. It is throughout its whole course a system of precepts, motives and encouragements to be holy. New motives are added to all that were before known. Christ has come into the world to teach us, and to die for us; his example has shed new and brighter light on the path of virtue; his instructions have more clearly taught us our duty, and provided more solemn

sanctions for it; and his death is the consummation of all motives, warnings and encouragements to be holy. And they who believe in him are crucified with him—are crucified to sin; and being buried with him by baptism into death, are raised with him to a newness of life. And a newness of life above all that Pagans or Jews had practised does emphatically become those who trust in the grace of the gospel. It were the most ungrateful of all things, to abuse it to licentiousness. It is the most wonderful of all things, that it could ever have been supposed to lower the motives or sanctions of holiness.

My other inference is, that they are not real Christians, the greater portion of whose feelings and actions are devoted to sinful objects and pursuits. Some have strangely argued that because those are called real Christians who love God and his worship, his word and his people, they who love them at all deserve this character. Now this is treating the Bible as if it were a book of mathematical definitions; —nay, not even so;—for where is it said definitely, that they who love God *at all* are true Christians, and will certainly meet acceptance?

The truth is, if we would understand the meaning of the Bible, we must interpret it naturally—we must interpret its language as we do all other language; we must ascertain its meaning by diligent comparison; we must consider, not what the terms may mean, but what they actually and commonly do mean. Do we say, in common and popular language, that one man loves another, if he loves him at all? No; the fact is, that we use terms in a larger and fuller

sense. There is not a vagary so wild, that it could not be proved from the Bible, by this attempt at mathematical preciseness.

I say again—and it is perfectly evident,—that if we would understand the meaning of terms we must not put a fanciful construction of our own upon them, but we must mark the prevailing use of them; and the *popular* sense of them, if they do not occur in a work of science; and such a work surely the Bible is not. Look then through the Scriptures, and see what is the character of the godly, the righteous, the pious, of those who have the promise of future happiness. Observe the descriptions of the good, the pious, the saints, the faithful, the people of God. Are they not those, who love God habitually and supremely; the tenor of whose lives is holy, the habits of whose minds are devout, whose inclinations and purposes are bent upon obedience, who keep the commandments not sometimes but habitually, whose good resolutions prevail over their evil purposes and temptations? Look at the passage on which we have been commenting. The apostle is speaking of believers, of Christians, of all Christians. And he says, they are dead unto sin, i. e. they are freed from its dominion; they are crucified with Christ; the body of sin is destroyed. The notion that the least degree of piety, the least feeling of pious affection, is piety enough to get to heaven with is to the last degree injurious. It leads men to encourage themselves with slight hopes, and to content themselves with low attainments. The question is too apt to be, not whether they have a great deal of

piety, but whether they have any piety at all. If we would follow the Bible and not our own vain imaginations, let us see to it that we are dead unto sin—that the old man is crucified—that the body of sin is destroyed—that we walk in newness of life—that we have an ardent, vigorous, habitual, ever living virtue and piety;

O. DEWEY,

---

THE DEFECTS OF THE COMMON ENGLISH VERSION OF  
THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The common English version of the New Testament, as has been already stated in page 120 of this work, was made more than two hundred years ago, at the commencement of the reign of King James the First, having been granted to the importunity of the Puritans by that theological and pedantic monarch, at the famous conference held at Hampton-Court in the year 1653. It was, in connexion with the translation of the Old Testament, the production of the united labors of forty-seven persons, all of whom are said to have been, and some doubtless were, men of considerable learning for their time. I would however here suggest a doult of the propriety of that unqualified admiration expressed by some persons towards these translators, which, not satisfied with conferring upon them certain indescribable powers falling little short of inspiration, endeavors at the same time in default of all evidence to superadd the accomplishments of mere human

learning. They pretend that these accomplishments were possessed by King James's translators in a degree not only abundantly adequate to a perfect perfect performance of their important task, but likewise far exceeding the attainments of all succeeding times, more especially of the age in which we live. I will merely state three facts which make me unwilling to adopt implicitly the opinions of these individuals.

In the first place, the study of the Greek language has, since the time when this translation was made, been most assiduously and successfully pursued. Scholars of the most comprehensive minds, the most brilliant genius, the most acute sagacity and varied erudition, have devoted to it the uninterrupted labors of their lives. The scholar needs not to have their illustrious names repeated;—those of Bentley and Porson alone would immortalize an age. The influence of their example and the fruits of their labors are visible in the superior attainments of the Greek critics and scholars of the present day; and I believe we need not go out of our own country, to find more than one person better qualified in this respect to translate the New Testament than any of those who were employed in the production of the common version.

The second fact relates to a circumstance which has been very much overlooked. It has commonly been supposed that all the learning of the realm was employed in the execution of King James's version. It is not so generally known as it ought to be, that there are many and unequivocal symptoms of an un-

worthy party spirit in the selection of the translators. One has but to look over the list of their names, to see that they were almost all beneficed clergymen of the Established Church, or connected with its nurseries, the two Universities. The Puritans, that much wronged and abused sect, were most jealously excluded by the royal critic, although among them were to be found some of the most distinguished scholars of the day. To mention but a single instance;—‘Hugh Broughton,’ I quote the words of the learned Eclectic reviewer of the Improved Version, ‘was in all probability the most profound Hebrew and Rabbinical scholar in Christendom; he possessed a surprisingly extensive and accurate knowledge of Greek; he had already distinguished himself by numerous and learned publications on biblical criticism; he made an offer of his services to the King, but it was treated with contemptuous disregard, for he was suspected of Puritanism.’

A third fact seems to furnish some ground for a rational conjecture concerning the qualifications of the translators. The work, we are informed, was three years in its execution, and it is stated, that ‘the untimely death of Mr Edward Lively much retarded the proceedings, much weight of the work lying on his skill in the original tongues.’ Must there not have been a lamentable deficiency of well-trained linguists in this august body, if the death of a single one out of forty-seven could have caused any serious interruption or delay in their proceedings?

The above facts are adduced merely for the purpose of testing the correctness of the assertions

which are often made, that the common version was the production of the collected learning of England, and that the translators were not only eminently qualified for the undertaking, but that they have made as good if not a better translation than can be made at the present day. I have no desire nor intention to undervalue their labors, or detract from their well-earned praises. I allow that they were men of considerable learning for their time, which is quite as much as can be proved in their behalf.

Whatever may have been their qualifications however, it appears that they were not left to their own judgment, but that the King, who was never better pleased than when quarrelling with or dictating to ecclesiastics and meddling with matters above his reach and capacity, kindly prescribed to them fourteen rules which were ‘to be very carefully observed.’ Some of these indicate very plainly the spirit with which the work would probably be conducted, and others determine in a considerable degree the probable value of a translation made in conformity to such rules. The third rule that the ‘old ecclesiastical words are to be kept, and the word *church* not to be translated *congregation*,’ and the fifth, that ‘when a word has divers significations, that is to be kept which is most agreeable to the analogy of faith,’ (meaning thereby of course the faith of the Church of England,) clearly evince that the translation was to be conformed to the opinions of the King, who had conveniently forgotten his old Scotch Presbyterian notions as soon

as he became the head of the English Episcopal Church. How far the translators were willing to proceed in compliance with these sectarian rules, appears from the fact, that they not only very faithfully obeyed the positive commands of their royal patron, but likewise paid due regard to his known predilections and fanciful notions on other points. The accusation is no less true for being as old as the translation, that ‘they were a little too complaisant to the King in favoring his notions of predestination, election, perseverance, &c. and particularly of witchcraft and familiar spirits, in defence of which that Prince had but a little before written a book entitled *Demonologie*.’ This complaisance will not appear so strange, if we consider that, as the reward of it, the King had provided that each one of them should receive a comfortable benefice on the dutiful completion of the part assigned him.

Two other rules seem to have confined the powers and accomplishments of the translators within rather narrow limits. The first rule was that ‘the ordinary Bible read in the church, commonly called the Bishops’ Bible, was to be followed, and as little altered as the original would permit;’ and the fourteenth, that ‘the translations of Tyndal, Coverdale, Matthews, Whitchurch, and Geneva were to be used when they agree better with the text than the Bishops’ Bible.’ In other words, the translation was intended to be a patchwork of the motley shreds of preceding versions. I have not time to enter into a discussion of the absolute or relative merits of these translations. It is sufficient for my present purpose

to observe, that Tyndal's was the basis of them all, and that there is a surprising similarity among them. I have taken the trouble to compare three of these translations with the common version throughout two chapters, one in Matthew and one in the Acts, and therefore hazard nothing in saying that the variations appear minute and unimportant. It certainly would be a very presumptuous assertion in any one to say that King James's is the best of the four. Dr Geddes, a critic whose learning and integrity are not to be questioned, thus remarks on this point;—‘I will venture to affirm, (and I affirm with full conviction,) that James's translators have less merit than any of their predecessors, and that the version of Tyndal, revised by Coverdale, is a juster representation of the original than our present vulgar version.’ In confirmation of what has been said, I need only quote the words of their own Preface, where they inform us, that ‘they never thought from the beginning that they should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one; but their endeavor and mark was, to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against.’

Such were the shackles imposed upon the translators of our common version. They had not only to flatter the whimsies of a vain and foolish king, but to regulate their judgments and model their language after the productions of men, to whose opinions but for the injunctions prescribed they might not have paid the slightest attention. The irksomeness and disgust of such a servitude could not be so

perfectly concealed, as not sometimes to vent themselves. ‘Some of the translators,’ we learn from Lewis, ‘much complained of the restraints they were laid under in this work by those who employed them, who by reason of State limited them, lest they might be thought not to set forth a new translation, but rather a new Bible.’\*

I have proceeded in this part of the discussion to a somewhat greater extent than I at first proposed. It is however a very important and essential part, and can hardly be too minutely and carefully examined; since without a knowledge of the characters of the translators, the influences by which they were affected, and the merits of preceding versions, we should be in danger of forming a very incorrect apprehension of our common version. I shall now point out what appear to me some of its principal defects.

I. The first and fundamental defect of this version is, that *it was made from a corrupt text*. The writings of antiquity have been handed down to us by successive transcriptions of the original manuscript. Common sense suggests, and experience proves, that the greatest possible attention and most minute care will not enable a transcriber to produce an exact and perfectly correct copy of his original;—art cannot effect a complete imitation. Of course no *single* manuscript can properly or safely be considered a correct representative of the original text. The only way to obtain or approximate to this is to compare together various manuscripts, and to supply from one

---

\* History of the English Translations of the Bible.

what is wanting in another. Mutual assistance is thus rendered, and the more numerous the manuscripts thus compared, the greater the probability that a correct text will ultimately be obtained. With regard to the text of the New Testament, this is rendered more feasible by the number of ancient Translations that were made of it, and the numerous citations from it which are found in the writings of the Fathers.

Such are the sources from which a pure text is to be derived; but such means were not in any considerable degree possessed, and to the degree in which they were possessed, were not very faithfully or accurately used by the compilers of the printed Greek text, from which the common version was made. A few Greek manuscripts, and most of them modern and of comparatively little authority, one or two ancient versions in a very corrupt state, and a few of the writings of the Fathers of the least value, interpolated and defective, constituted the materials used in the formation of this text. And these wretched materials were still more wretchedly managed. The unfaithfulness of the Complutensian editors, the haste of Erasmus, the carelessness of Robert Stephens, and the theological prejudices and critical conjectures of Theodore Beza are the pillars which support the common Greek text.\*

---

\* The Eclectic Reviewer, above quoted, remarks—‘It appears that they have, upon the whole, too implicitly adhered to the texts of Stephens and Beza.’ Symonds, in his ‘Observations,’ observes, that ‘King James’s translators are said chiefly to have used Stephens’s edition of 1550.’ The Received Text, as it is called, was not formed till after the Translation was made, in 1624.

Which of these four editions the translators generally followed it is rather difficult to determine. It is sufficient to know that neither of them has any claim to be considered a correct text, and that the translators sometimes adopted the readings of the Latin Vulgate in preference to those of the Greek original. I maintain then that a revision of the common version is necessary, if nothing more were contemplated than to make it conformable to the present correct text which Griesbach's edition presents; and so long as King James's translation retains the interpolated passage in St John's First Epistle, (to mention no other examples,) so long will the friends of a pure and unadulterated text be justified in asserting that it has no just pretensions to the authority which has been claimed for it.

II. The second defect of the common version, is, that *it has mistranslated the original*, in consequence of mistaking its meaning, and thereby suggests ideas and produces impressions in the mind of the English reader which are not sanctioned by the original. This is not a new complaint, nor is it one which at the present day requires much labored proof. It is implied in the daily complaints and conduct of all parties and sects, who in their controversies are continually appealing from this translation to the original, and those not the least frequently who are the most strenuous in their opposition to revisions and new translations. It is proved by the opinions and labors of the most learned and candid critics of all denominations—of the Roman Catholic Geddes,

of the English Bishops Lowth and Newcome, the Presbyterians Campbell and Macknight, the Dissenters Doddridge and Priestley, and the numerous other authorities collected by Archbishop Newcome in his very useful book on this subject. And most satisfactorily can it be proved to the conviction of any one who is willing and qualified to compare the version with the Greek in a patient, careful and critical manner. The limits of this article will not permit me to produce examples, which of course are the most satisfactory kind of proof, and on which I confidently rely. In doing this, the only difficulty would have been found in selecting from the great number of passages which immediately present themselves to one's recollection. I can now only refer to the collection made by Dr Symonds, professor in the University of Cambridge, England, where the most abundant and convincing examples will be found of the defects mentioned in this and the succeeding heads.\* I am the more willing to omit these examples, as I think few of my readers require to be convinced on this point, and shall content myself with merely alluding to the principal causes of these mis-translations.

1. The Hebraistic character and construction of the Greek of the New Testament, which seems to have been little understood or little attended to by the

---

\* This work is entitled, 'Observations upon the Expediency of revising the present English Version of the Four Gospels, and of the Acts of the Apostles. By John Symonds, L. L. D. &c. Cambridge, 1789.' He afterwards published a similar work on the Epistles.

translators. In fact it could hardly have been otherwise, for it was not till some years after their work appeared, that those warm and able discussions commenced concerning the Hellenistic dialect, and still later that the learned works of Glassius, Gattaker, and Vorstius at once proved the necessity and supplied the means of that intimate acquaintance with the peculiar style of these writings, which is now deemed an indispensable qualification for every one who presumes to translate or interpret them.

2. Connected with this is the second cause, the literal and verbal translation of words, phrases and idioms. The translators do not appear to have had any sufficient acquaintance with the general nature and use of language. They do not seem to have considered that every language has a peculiar genius—contains expressions and modes of speaking corresponding to the modes of reasoning and thinking, to the intellectual character, and to the moral, civil and physical condition of the people, by whom it is used;—that consequently no two languages, and of course the individual words of no two languages correspond to each other;—that those words which are commonly considered synonymous have different shades of meaning;—and that one of two supposed corresponding terms in different languages will usually be found to have a wider or narrower range in its application than its correlative.

3. The third cause is the neglect of the numerous ellipses which are found in the Greek, and which, although they present little or no difficulty to the learned and attentive student of the original, are yet

fraught with much misunderstanding and perplexity to the reader of a literal translation of the mere single words which include the ellipsis. It was the duty of the translators of the common version to supply these, so that the English reader might receive the same ideas from the words, which were connected with them in the mind of one to whom the language was vernacular. To the latter they caused no uncertainty; time and use had rendered them familiar; and what appears to us in our present version an abrupt and disconnected sentence, was to him a simple and concise mode of expressing his most common thoughts. It is astonishing how much error and confusion have been unnecessarily produced by this neglect on the part of our translators. In some cases indeed they have ventured to supply what was implied by a few italics; but not always successfully.

4. The fourth cause is the translation of expletives and pleonasms. From the fact that no two languages exactly correspond, it follows that more words will frequently be used in one language than in another to express the same thought. Now it is the business of a translator to accommodate the words he uses to the idiom of the language into which he translates. He should not only supply ellipses, but retrench redundancies. King James's translators however do not seem to have understood this. They appear rather to have been of the opinion of Canne, the author of the marginal references, who tells us very sagely and seriously, that 'It is necessary to preserve the letter entire, how

inconvenient, yea how absurd soever and harsh it may seem to men's carnal reason. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men.'

5. The fifth cause is the careless manner in which particles are translated. Every one who is at all acquainted with the principles of grammar and the nature and use of language, knows that the meaning of sentences and the force of argument depend more upon the correct use of particles than of any other parts of speech. It is likewise well known that the particles of the Greek of the New Testament, like most other words of the same and of other languages, have different significations. Thus the particle  $\gamma\alpha\beta$  has, according to Schleusner, nine different meanings or uses; according to Hoogeveen, fourteen. Schleusner assigns to the particle  $\delta\varepsilon$  eleven significations; Hoogeveen twenty-four. The former gives to  $\delta\tau\iota$  twenty-two uses, the latter twenty-eight. And finally, Hoogeveen finds the particle  $\kappa\alpha\iota$  is used in thirty different senses, and Schleusner enlarges the number to thirty-four. Such being the simple fact, what opinion must we form of the judgment or capacity of those translators, who either through ignorance or negligence pay no attention to these variations of meaning—who, whatever may be the connexion or train of the discourse, whether an inference be deduced, a proposition stated, a comparison formed, or an opposition asserted, invariably render  $\gamma\alpha\beta$ , *for*,  $\delta\varepsilon$ , *but*,  $\delta\tau\iota$ , *because*, and  $\kappa\alpha\iota$ , *and*? A curious instance of this, the only one we have space to mention, but which I think is sufficient to prove that my statement is not too bold, oc-

curs in the ninth chapter of St Luke. This chapter consists of sixty-two verses, twenty-three of which begin with the conjunction  $\kappa\alpha\iota$ . Every one of these the translators of the common version have rendered ‘*and*,’ with how much propriety can easily be tested. We have only to look into the translations of Campbell, Wakefield, or Archbishop Newcome, to see the great improvement which is effected in this chapter by a correct rendering of this frequently recurring particle. ‘There are,’ says Symonds, ‘probably not fewer than two hundred passages in the four Gospels where sentences are connected by this conjunction which ought to have been disjoined, and in which of course the sense is sometimes materially affected by it.’

6. The sixth and last cause that I shall mention, was the ignorance or inattention of the translators to the peculiar manners and customs of the East. This, though not so fruitful a source of mistranslation as some of the causes before mentioned, is still productive of much misunderstanding and error to the common reader. The translation of the Greek word  $\pi\gamma\omega\sigma\chi\iota\nu\epsilon\omega$ , by *worship*, in cases where religious adoration was not intended, is one instance of the kind alluded to. The English word, to be sure, had a somewhat wider range of signification at the time the translation was made than at present. But this fact, however it may palliate the fault of the translators in this particular case, does not invalidate in the least the objection that lies against the version in general on account of this and similar defects.

III. The third defect of the common version is, that *it is obscure and ambiguous*. If clearness and certainty are needed anywhere, they doubtless must be in writings which purport to contain a revelation from God on the most important subjects;—more particularly if we consider that the great mass of those to whom these writings are addressed, have neither the opportunity nor the means of unravelling the perplexities of a confused translation. There are no persons, we believe, who have read the common English version of the New Testament with any tolerable attention, but will add their testimony to that of the learned and the critical, that obscurity and ambiguity pervade the work. Many of the causes of these defects are the same with those mentioned under the last head. But the causes which seem to have operated most powerfully and extensively, were a misapprehension on their part of the nature and character of the writings, and the strange form in which they were presented to them. They appear to have entertained the opinion, which has indeed at all times been too prevalent, and which even at the present day is not without its advocates, that the writings of the New Testament are different from all other writings;—that there is something mysterious about the word of God;—that every verse, word and letter is inexpressibly and indeed equally precious;—that there is something practical, if not spiritual, concealed under the whole of the carnal letter;—in short that these writings are chiefly, if not entirely, doctrinal and didactic in their character and design.

In this view of the sacred records they were no doubt confirmed by finding the text cut up into chapters and crumbled into verses. In translating, they seem to have thought that each verse was a separate proposition, stating some particular fact, declaring some particular truth, or inculcating some particular precept, and that all they had to do was to translate each verse separately and independently,—without taking into view the connexion of the discourse, or the train of the argument. They do not appear to have reflected that the *Memoirs*, as Justin Martyr correctly denominates them, of our Saviour and his apostles were composed for the information of the early christian converts;—that they are historical and biographical documents, connected accounts, which if divided and translated as a bundle of aphorisms or maxims, will inevitably produce obscurity, if nothing worse.

But it is in the Epistles of St Paul that the defects of the common version necessarily resulting from a wrong view of the character of the writings are displayed in their full force, and in great variety and abundance. The nature of epistolary composition, the peculiar warmth and vehemence of St Paul's character, which breathe through and stand out upon the face of all his writings, producing breaks, parentheses, involved and unfinished sentences, and hurried conclusions, are intrinsic causes of obscurity, and render this part of the christian Scriptures much more difficult than any other to be understood or translated. But these difficulties have been multiplied in a tenfold degree by the manner

in which they have been put into English by King James's translators. St Paul has in this way been grossly injured. His argument has been made to appear inconclusive, his ideas perplexed and entangled, and his mode of expression awkward and uncouth. How unjust such imputations are with regard to St Paul, and how well founded the charges here adduced against the common version of his Epistles, are well known to the attentive reader of the original, and will appear to any English reader who will compare this version with any of the recent translations, and read the Epistles, as they ought always to be read, as letters addressed to particular societies of men on particular occasions and for particular purposes.

The only other cause of ambiguity in the version that I have room to mention, is the useless variation of terms employed to render the same Greek word. Words, as I have already observed, have different meanings in different connexions; and a change in such cases is not only pardonable, but a neglect to vary the term would be a great error. The instances I now allude to are of a very different kind;—such for example, as Acts xvii. 19, 22, where the very same Greek word is translated *Areopagus* and *Mars' Hill*, and Acts viii. 13, where the original for ‘wondered’ is the very same which in verses 9th and 11th had been rendered ‘bewitched.’ What mere English reader suspects that the *Jesus* mentioned in Acts vii. 45, and Hebrews iv. 8, is the *Joshua* of the Old Testament? The translators indeed do not seem to have been guided by any

consistent or uniform rule in the rendering of words, phrases or sentences, as may be seen by comparing together the parallel passages of the Evangelists. This probably arose in a considerable degree from the circumstance that different parts were translated by different persons. The translation of course is not of a piece; and what is a little unaccountable, the translators not only differ from one another, but sometimes from themselves in the same chapter and even in the same verse.

IV. The fourth defect of the common version is, that it abounds with ungrammatical constructions, with uncouth and vulgar expressions, and obsolete words and phrases. A version designed for general use should at least have the ordinary qualifications of good grammar, and correct and intelligible language. In adducing these charges however, of which the most satisfactory examples may be found in Symonds's Observations and Dr Campbell's Dissertations, I do not deny that the language, compared with that of the writers of the age in which the translators lived, is remarkably pure and correct, and that the version is free in a great part from the pedantic and grotesque manner of writing which was then so prevalent. So far, with these qualifications and in reference to those times, I agree with Bishop Lowth in his opinion that the common version is the best standard of our language. The reason however, I conceive, why it is so free from the faults of its age, is its close adherence to the construction of the original, which in the historical parts has all the plainness of its Hebrew model, and even in St Paul's Epistles is simplicity

itself, when contrasted with the inversion, perplexity and awkwardness of the sentences composed in the days of Elizabeth and James. Yet I cannot concur with the learned Bishop in regarding it as the best standard of our language at the present day. The numerous grammatical errors which he has himself exposed is one proof that it is not such. And the assertion itself appears very strange and unreasonable to one who compares the language with that used by Burke, Johnson, Robertson, and Hume. It cannot be denied that there are a great many words scattered throughout the version that are not generally understood; a great many which are misunderstood, because they have acquired in our modern English a different meaning from that which belonged to them two hundred years ago; a great many that are now vulgar and uncouth, which in days of yore might have been usual and approved. And there appears no good reason why any of these should now be retained, any more than that we should rake up and bring back into our writings and conversation the obsolete dialect of Chaucer.

It is true indeed that there is a strong attachment among some persons to these antiquated words. The habit of reading over and over again the same writing reconciles men to rest satisfied with the sound of the words, without attaching to them any definite meaning. No writings have suffered so much from this effect of reiterated perusal, as the sacred books. No books have been so much read, and so little understood. The reason of this is a plain one. Among

a great class of readers there prevails a confused and indistinct notion, that there is something of sanctity and mystery appertaining to the very words of holy writ—a superstitious belief that there is something meritorious in the mere turning over and gazing upon the leaves of a Bible. Thus you may often meet with persons who will repeat to you verbatim chapter after chapter, and who are well armed at all points with what they call proof-texts. Yet the same persons, if subjected to a little examination, will be found lamentably ignorant of the meaning of the words which they have thus fluently recited, and quite unacquainted with the connexion or bearing of their proof-texts. Now I believe that a new translation of the Scriptures would do away, in a considerable degree, the pernicious habit of repeating words without ideas, and reading the Bible without understanding it. It would break the mystery of words and syllables, and contribute more to a correct apprehension of the Scriptures than any other means whatever. In the execution of such a translation I would have the defects of language that have been mentioned entirely removed, as I see no reason why elegant taste, pure language, perspicuous expressions, and correct grammar should be inconsistent with christian piety and a correct faith.

V. The fifth and last defect of the common version is the outward form in which it is presented to the reader. This is a circumstance deserving of more attention than has usually been paid to it, as it is one on which the profit no less than the pleasure of reading the Scriptures in a considerable degree de-

pends. 1. In the first place the punctuation is in many places incorrect. It is well known, that the most ancient copies of the text are written without any division of the words, or any marks or points to determine the sense. The division therefore of words and the punctuation of sentences are altogether matters of judgment. It cannot be denied that these have often been determined injudiciously, and that great light might be thrown on many passages by a different arrangement. The numerous affirmative sentences which should be read interrogatively, sufficiently explain my meaning, and show the expediency of a thorough revision. 2. The breaking up the text into chapters and verses, is a great defect in the common version, and is a powerful obstacle to a correct understanding of the New Testament. This division splits up not only the parts of a discourse but the parts of sentences, and serves to keep alive that erroneous opinion concerning the character of these writings which has been already alluded to. 3. The numerous italics scattered throughout the version are another defect in the outward form. These are not only for the most part unnecessary, but they often obscure and weaken the sense instead of clearing and strengthening it. They are either implied in the original, or they are not. If they are implied, there is no reason why they should be thus distinguished from the rest of the text. If they are not implied, they are merely the comment of the translators, and therefore should not be inserted. 4. And finally the titles over the chapters and along the upper margin, as they are drawn

up in the common version, are a positive detriment. In fact, they are in many places nothing more or less than a running commentary on the text, ascribing to certain chapters and verses a particular meaning, asserting that they contain doctrines and notions, which but for this information the majority of readers might never suspect of being therein expressed, and directly imputing to the authors of the New Testament, more particularly to St Paul, opinions and statements which are unsupported by their writings.

Such are what I consider some of the principal defects of the common version of the New Testament; and they are defects which should be seriously and candidly considered. It need not be added for the sake of any intelligent reader that these defects do not invalidate the sufficiency of the common version for all essential purposes of faith and practice. Far be it from me to give countenance to such an error as this. On the other hand, I believe that the most faulty translation of the Bible that was ever made contains sufficient of divine truth 'for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' The great truths and principles of religion stand out so prominently on the sacred page that they cannot be overlooked or obscured. Let no one therefore be less diligent in reading the Scriptures because the English version is not so good as it may be made.

The defects that have been mentioned are such as the translators could not have altogether avoided, and are generally to be imputed to misapprehension and

ignorance, rather than to neglect or design. We cheerfully accord to them all the praise and merit to which they are entitled. They did what they could with the information and means which they possessed. But since their times the facilities for understanding the Bible have been greatly multiplied. The original languages are better understood. The design, scope, and tendency of the several books have been more clearly discerned, and their contents have been amply illustrated from a great variety of sources. We possess, at the present day, much better opportunities and means of making an accurate translation of the sacred volume. Scholars of all sects have been studying and elucidating it. They have labored diligently and faithfully in their respective walks. They have amassed a treasure of learned criticism and sound interpretation. We think that it is now time that the people should have the benefit of their labors and studies. Of what use is it for the critic and the student of sacred literature to settle the text, and discover the true meaning of the Scriptures, if the people are not to have the results in plain English—if they are not to have the common English translation, which they read every day, corrected and improved?

If it be indeed true, that the translation of the Christian Scriptures which is in general use among us, and which is constantly appealed to by so many millions of English readers as the only standard of faith and manners, is encumbered by the defects that have been enumerated, it certainly is high time that the reputation which it has so long

enjoyed, and to which it can produce no other title but prescription, should come to an end. A new translation or a thorough revision of the old one is now very necessary, and it becomes all who call themselves Protestant Christians, to contribute their efforts to the accomplishment of this important object. These efforts may be made in various ways;—by aiding and encouraging those who are willing and qualified to undertake the work; by removing any unjust prejudices which exist in favor of the common version; by showing the groundlessness of the common objections to a new translation; and by silencing as far as possible the illiberal clamors, which are sometimes raised against any alteration of the common version. Let all those who have the interests of Christianity at heart—who are desirous that the christian Scriptures should be understood and appreciated, do something that will help to carry forward this highly necessary work. All are equally concerned in having a correct version of the Word of Life, and of course should be alike willing to encourage any attempt to attain this object, which is made with a good spirit and purpose, and with suitable intelligence and skill.

---

A. YOUNG.

NOTE.

The preceding article has filled more pages than was expected. But as I was unwilling to injure it by division, eight pages more than usual are given in this number. The next number will not, however, be smaller, nor is it intended that future numbers shall be larger, than the regular size.

## USE OF WORDS.

The use of words is to communicate ideas, to express what we feel or think, to make ourselves understood. This is a very plain proposition, and may appear to many a trite and useless one. But trite as it may be and useless as it may seem, it is not regarded, if it be known, by half the people who use words. Many use words without meaning, many use the wrong words to convey their meaning, and many more fail of making themselves understood through the ignorance, inattention, prejudice, or different mental associations of their hearers or readers.

It may be said of a large proportion of the words in common use, especially on religious subjects, that they have no meaning, convey no ideas to those who hear, if they do to those who utter them. I do not mean that they answer no purpose at all, but that they do not answer their proper purpose, that of communicating distinct ideas, giving clear and right conceptions of what is meant. Being often used, they do express something; we can usually form a conjecture at least as to the thoughts that are passing in the mind of the speaker, because we find that the words are always in the same or nearly the same connexion, and we are necessarily led in time to associate something with the mere sound. But it is often very difficult to say what this something is, impossible to define it to our own satisfaction or to that of any one else. And as a general rule, that which we cannot define we do not understand. To this rule there may be exceptions,

in favor of those who have never been in the habit of attempting to express their ideas in clear language. Of these I do not speak, but of the many who every day speak and hear, write and read, in words which fall upon the ear or play upon the lips with as little effect as the words of a foreign tongue. Are there none who use words thus in prayer, or hear them thus from the pulpit, or read them in their Bibles ?

Another fault equally common, perhaps more injurious, is the practice of using words, not without meaning, but always with one and the same meaning ; or rather, the practice of receiving words in this way, as if the same word must bear always the same meaning. The connexion in which the word stands, the subject to which it belongs, the time, the purpose, are not permitted to modify the meaning. Little attention is paid to the all-important principle in language, that words, written or spoken, are nothing in themselves but arbitrary signs or representatives of ideas, and that these ideas may vary with many varying circumstances while the words remain the same. There is probably not a word in any language that has not more than one meaning. There is not a word that is not used in different senses at different periods, and even at the same period by different people. Every one knows, who has ever given a moment's thought to the matter, that all words change their meaning, in part or wholly, with change of time, place, subject, people, and many other things. Go from one country to another, from one state or town to another, and what variations do you find in the meaning of the same words. Compare books written but one century ago with those written now, and

how soon do you see a similar difference. And in any one place at any one time, observe the different **senses** which almost every word bears, as applied to different subjects, or found in different connexions on the same subject. Nay, mark the different, often opposite, meaning given to the same word, by a slight variation of emphasis or accent, a peculiar tone or even look.

How much is the meaning of language affected, how often is it determined, by these circumstances. And how readily in most cases, on common subjects, do we note these differences, and allow for them in the impression we carry away as to the meaning of the writer or speaker. How common is it in conversation, when told that such a thing was said, to ask in what way it was said, in what connexion, with what tone, accent, or manner. How many and pernicious are the mistakes that arise from not asking these questions, from not ascertaining as correctly as possible all the dependencies and bearings of the word or assertion referred to, whether in speaking or writing. What more fruitful source of mischief, of suspicion, heartburning, and rancorous enmity is there, than the habit of disregarding all these qualifying circumstances, and judging and acting without reference to any thing but the bare letter or rumor. Who would be willing, that everything he had written or said should be used in this way,—parts torn from their connexion and given in the most abrupt and insulated form, not qualified by anything that went before or followed them?

We do not treat authors so in common cases, as I have just said. There are obvious laws, natural principles of interpretation, which all know they are bound

to observe in common justice, and which all seem willing to observe on general subjects. Where then is it, that these principles are forgotten and these laws violated? It is in religion, the very subject in which we should be most anxious, and feel ourselves most sacredly bound, to abstain from all injustice and avoid all error. It is in reading and hearing the Bible, the very book, of all books in the world, which calls for the most rigorous and honest application of the same rules. The Bible is a very old book, parts of it the oldest writings in existence. It is the production of different ages, all very remote from our own, consisting of distinct books written at distant intervals by different men, each writer acting under peculiar influences, with a peculiar purpose, affected by different circumstances local and personal, all of which it is not easy for us to learn or understand fully. How singular then is the confidence or the carelessness, which takes up this book and interprets its language with less exercise of reason, less consideration of its own peculiar circumstances, less application of common fixed principles, than almost any book in use! How singular is the narrowness or looseness, which detaches single little portions—those portions which by an accidental and comparatively recent division have been parted off into verses—and builds upon some one of them a whole system, to which all the rest must lend their help! How strange is it, that nearly all of us associate with certain leading terms in Scripture one narrow meaning, which we suppose them to bear wherever they occur, and from which we call it heresy or impiety to deviate!

There is another singular inconsistency in our treatment of the Bible. We read it not only with less understanding of what we read than other books,—and this perhaps must be so with most readers,—but also with more willingness, apparently, to understand it less. Our not understanding it gives us less concern than with common subjects, and we take less pains to overcome the difficulty. A man will read the Bible every Sunday, it may be every day in the week, from his childhood up, connecting a very vague meaning if any at all with half the words, and yet read on, asking no questions, expressing no regret, believing it to be so ordained and that it will be just as well for him in the end as if he understood it all. If by any accident light should be thrown upon a passage which has always been dark, he may rejoice, and say he wonders he did not see it before—he has read that passage a thousand times but never thought of its having such a meaning. He might say perhaps, that he never thought of its having any particular meaning for him; it was in the Bible and he read it, and that was enough. But give him another book, a treatise on the education of his children or the management of his business or some of the immediate interests of life, and see if he will be content to read that in the same way, going over its pages again and again, for months and years, with only the most vague idea of its meaning and use. No; he will seek for information, he will use all the means within his command, will apply to it all his powers, compare part with part, this book with others, and endeavor to make every page and word intelligible. And so in listening to discourses on ordinary subjects, on any subject but re-

ligion, few would sit so quietly year after year, hearing so many words that are but words of course, good sounds but sounds only, as is the case in listening to sermons. Not that nothing is understood and nothing gained by this habit of reading and hearing. Not that it would be better to leave the Bible unopened and the courts of God's house untrodden. Let not any thing I may say be so perverted. I mean only that there is a heedlessness, an apathy and unconcern, in the performance of this duty, that is peculiar to it and peculiarly inconsistent. Though religion is of infinite moment and allowed to be so, men seem to think it of less importance to understand clearly what they read and hear, they are more easily satisfied with empty sounds and the most indistinct impressions, than in relation to any other subject presented to them; and not merely those who care nothing about religion, but those who are interested and anxious.

All this, no doubt, is the natural consequence, in part, of our great familiarity with religious words and forms,—our being accustomed to use them before it is possible for us to understand them. From this early and strengthening habit, we peruse unconsciously the sacred page, and listen quietly, or rather sit quietly without listening, in the sanctuary. That we should be better without the habit, no one, I presume, will venture to say. But that it needs watching and guarding, that it may lead to some evil as well as good, all must own. Besides this, there is the common feeling, that religion is in its nature a difficult subject, its province is distant, its objects are remote, its truths high and deep; many of them above our comprehension, op-

posed to our senses, our experience, our reason, some tell us, both believers and unbelievers. Much of it, they say, is a mystery, and all we can do or should attempt is to receive it in reverence. And this, in fact, is the great cause. It is the belief, that there is reverence and obedience and consequent reward in the very act of reading and hearing, though little or nothing is understood. It is ‘a form of sound words,’ and there is a charm in it. We read and hear because we ought. It is right; it is a duty at particular times, and a good influence, though unseen and unknown at the time, may come from it. So there may. But let us see that we do not lean too much on this influence. Let us take care lest our expectation of it, our faith in it be made by us an apology for our indolence and neglect in not endeavoring to understand as well as read.

Some of the faults of which I have spoken may be best shown by familiar instances. Take the word *faith*. How is this word generally understood, as a scriptural term, a religious word? I believe, almost universally in one restricted sense,—the sense of belief; the belief of certain truths which the speaker or hearer supposes to be essential. There may be one other common use of the word, to express some indefinable religious feeling. But what is its use in Scripture? As various as that of any word perhaps in the language. By *faith*, is sometimes meant the gospel or Christianity in general; sometimes, the belief of the gospel; sometimes, it denotes things that are revealed but are not the objects of our senses; sometimes, confidence, religious trust; again, fidelity, veracity, integrity; and again, a firm conviction of the mind. These are some of its leading significa-

tions. Its most general meaning perhaps is that which it has when applied to the most common events in life, viz : reliance on the testimony of others, belief as opposed to knowledge. In one place, it is particularly defined, and has two meanings given it in the same verse. ‘Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.’ We see then, how many mistakes must result from supposing this word to denote always a particular action or state of the mind with reference to future eternal things. When the sick woman expressed to Jesus her confidence in him, and he said to her—‘thy faith hath saved thee,’ he means plainly by faith, her belief that by his miraculous power he could cure her of her disease, not any faith in his religion or moral purpose.

And this last case affords an instance of another word singularly restricted in its meaning by many who hear and use it—the word *saved* or *salvation*. Wherever this word is found in Scripture, it is understood by many to denote invariably the same thing, redemption from sin and that state of perfect felicity which is the end and reward of the Christian’s course. It is seldom understood to refer to mere temporal blessing, though nothing can be plainer than that this is its meaning in many places. The answer of Jesus to the woman just mentioned is one. ‘Thy faith hath saved thee;’—saved thee from what? Sin and its consequences? No, but from your present disease and suffering. You trusted in my power to heal you, and you are healed. The language of Peter in the storm—‘Lord save us, we are perishing’—is an instance of a similar use of the word; and in general, when it is said that ‘Christ hath saved us,’ ‘ye are saved,’ &c.

i. e., whenever salvation is spoken of as something already attained by those now living, the meaning clearly is, that they are saved from ignorance and delusion and put in the way of final salvation ; they can secure it if they will, and are therefore said to have it. The general sense of salvation in Scripture is that of deliverance simply. Yet how seldom is it so understood, and its particular meaning allowed to be determined by the connexion in which it is found, the subject to which it belongs ?

*Mystery* affords another instance of a word not understood from a want of attention to the different connexions in which it stands. This word however has not so many meanings as those we have been considering. Its proper significations may be reduced to two ; —something that cannot be understood, and something that is not or was not understood. It is the first of these significations only that is generally supposed to belong to the word mystery, though this is much the least frequent in Scripture, and indeed is thought by some critics never to be its meaning there. It is almost always found in immediate connexion with some words which show, that it must denote something that may be known if it be not already ; something that was not known before and could not have been discovered by unaided reason, but has been now revealed and may be understood by all ; as Paul says of God—‘ having made known unto me the mystery of his will,’—‘ by revelation he made known unto me the mystery,’—‘ whereby when ye read ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.’ How would a little attention to the scriptural use of this word save it from the great abuse of

making it always denote something above our comprehension and opposed to reason. Attention to its history too would show that it is one of those words, to which I alluded above, that change their meaning materially with change of time, religion, and people. For we find that even the ordinances of our religion have been called mysteries, and yet what more simple, open, free !

It would be easy to find other illustrations, in such words as *spirit*, *grace*, *righteousness*, &c. but it cannot be necessary to follow them out. I will only attempt to draw from the subject a few plain rules.

Words in themselves are only marks or signs of ideas. What precise ideas they express, depends upon the circumstances in which they are found, the character of him who uses them, his knowledge, his subject, his aim, his general habits of thinking and style of writing, and many like considerations.

Every important word has different meanings, and in determining which of these it bears in a particular place, we must exercise our judgment freely, taking into consideration all the circumstances that we can command.

These rules, so plain and undisputed, require to be applied as strictly to the language of the Bible, as to any book. Much more so ; because the Bible is more difficult of interpretation than most books, and because it is infinitely more important that we should understand it rightly.

All language is human, the language of Scripture equally so with that of other books. It requires then the same exercise of reason, of judgment, knowledge,

common sense, and all fair principles and means of interpretation.

He is not faithful to his privileges, nor true to the spirit of his calling, who as a Christian neglects to observe these things, and allows early education, habit, prejudice, party, or any low and little considerations to narrow the meaning of the sacred writings and hinder his right reception of their great truths. Nor will blind reverence atone for this neglect.

The true reverence for God's Word is that which prompts to a diligent, conscientious, impartial use of all the means which God has given us of coming to the pure and undefiled truth as it is in Jesus; 'proving all things, holding fast that which is good.'

In all let us remember the declaration of the great Apostle. 'I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.'

E. B. HALL.

---

#### WHY ARE THE EPISTLES OF ST PAUL SO OBSCURE?

While there are many things in the Epistles of St Paul which the unlearned and unstable from the time of St Peter until now wrest to their own injury, these writings are frequently looked upon as if they were extremely vague and incoherent, and their author is regarded as a man whose zeal confused his ideas and outstripped his knowledge. By some he is thought

scarcely better than a madman. To consider St Paul and his writings in this light is, to say the very least, to do him no small injustice. I beg to remind those who are disposed to entertain this idea of the apostle of a remark made by Locke, who in the meek and candid spirit of true philosophy set himself at work to study the Epistles of St Paul, and who has earned the high praise of having done more for their elucidation than any professed theologian. ‘If any one,’ he observes, ‘has thought St Paul a loose writer, it is only because he was a loose reader. He that takes notice of St Paul’s design, shall find that there is not a word scarce, or an expression that he makes use of, but with relation and tendency to his main purpose.’

That it is difficult however to understand St Paul and to enter into the spirit of his writings without considerable attention and study, will surprise no one who thinks for a moment what these writings are. They are epistles—letters. Of course, as in all writings of this description, many things important to their full explanation are taken for granted, or alluded to in the most incidental manner, because they were familiar to the writer and to the persons addressed, and perhaps to them alone. They are letters moreover about eighteen hundred years old. Now the course of time is continually working the greatest changes in the modes of thought and speech current in the world. The style of thinking and speaking prevalent at the present day seems to us perfectly plain, natural, and easy. But in the course of two or three hundred years it will appear harsh and obsolete. It is impossible that writings composed eighteen centuries ago should not become in a

great degree antiquated and difficult to be understood. But farther ; the Epistles of Paul were originally written in a dialect which has long ceased to be used ; and the generality of Christians can read them only in a translation, a translation which is itself becoming ancient.

I have briefly hinted at the principal causes of the obscurity of St Paul's Epistles, merely to show that if the apostle sometimes appears loose and extravagant, it is not because he is really so, but because our knowledge is limited. While it is limited, it becomes all who wish to be thought candid and reasonable men to hesitate long before they condemn St Paul for a fault, which is not his but ours. And yet perhaps not our fault, but our misfortune.

All circumstances considered, the writings of the New Testament are as simple and plain and intelligible as they could possibly be, and as we have any right to expect. That which renders them in some parts obscure is of indispensable importance as it concerns evidence. For instance. There are in the New Testament many brief and incidental allusions to feelings and opinions that have long since passed away, that existed only at the time the New Testament was written. It is difficult of course to understand these allusions. But when by a careful study of the record and by examining other sources of information, as we may do, we become acquainted with the views and feelings alluded to, we have new and interesting evidence that the New Testament must have been written about the time it purports to have been written,—that it is not the fiction of an after age. Its numerous and undesigned references to the feelings and opinions of a particular

period prove decisively that it must have been composed at that period. If there were only two or three allusions of this kind, this evidence might be unsatisfactory, as they might possibly be the cunning work of some adroit impostor. But when such allusions are numerous, natural and incidental, and when moreover there are no traces of the favorite dogmas of the subsequent age, we have strong internal evidence of the date of the books of the New Testament. To my own mind this evidence is so powerful, that I cannot but be grateful for it, as an abundant compensation for that obscurity in the record with which it is inseparably connected. I should not care to have the obscurity done away at the expense of this branch of evidence; and I know not how else it could be done away.

Again. These incidental references—these obscure allusions to opinions and sentiments prevalent at the time when the evangelists and apostles wrote, are not only valuable now, notwithstanding the mistakes and difficulties they occasion, for the sake of the evidence they bring to Christianity; they were necessary in the first instance. They were essential to the original and primary establishment of our religion. If Christ and his apostles had not addressed themselves directly to the men of their own day, employing modes of thought and speech then popular, I do not see how the understandings and affections of men could ever have been taken hold of. If the christian Scriptures had consisted of general statements of faith and duty, having no peculiar application, they would inevitably have failed to touch and interest any persons in particular. Whereas Christianity, as we now have it in the New Testament,

appears before us in direct and close application to a particular period and a peculiar state of feeling. It deals closely and directly and primarily with those among whom it first appeared. Its instructions are adapted to the ways of thinking current at the time. In this way it arrested the attention and took possession of the hearts of men and gained ardent adherents, who in like manner addressed themselves to others, and thus the truth was communicated from mind to mind and from community to community and from age to age.

It seems sometimes to be thought that it would have been much better if, when a revelation was to be made, God had given to mankind a general, abstract and complete statement of what we ought to believe and do. This is the suggestion of human wisdom. How futile it is, let the testimony of ecclesiastical history show. This very course, which some people appear to think would have been the wisest, has been attempted times without number. Council after Council, and Assembly after Assembly have met, and with the most elaborate care drawn up formulas of faith. And what has been the consequence? Has the world approached any nearer to union and harmony? Has it been any freer from bigotry, violence and superstition? Have not these creeds and confessions of faith been made the rallying points of envy, malice and all uncharitableness? 'Ah! but if we had only had a creed composed by divine inspiration, by the finger of God, it would have been otherwise.' I set no limits to the divine power when I say in answer to this idea, that as language is in its nature imperfect, it could not be framed into a medium of

**thought so perfect as to allow no place for mistake and disputation ; and to ask why God has not given us a statement of faith in terms which admit of no error and no debate, is to ask why he did not do what is impossible in the nature of things.**

The truth is, and it is a very important truth, if the sacred Scriptures, the writings of the apostle Paul for instance, could possibly have been a thousand times more plain and intelligible than they are, it would have made no difference. So long as the ignorant will dogmatize and the timid defer to the arrogant and the superstitious hunger and thirst for strange and out of the way doctrines, the religious world will be full of disputation, tyranny and fanaticism. It is no matter how clear and explicit may be the letter, the written authority of religion. Let any intelligent man read over the life and instructions of Jesus Christ,—I care not how imperfect is the translation,—and then say whether any thing could be further removed from worldly show, power and wealth, than the character and religion of Jesus. And yet see what it is that men have made of Christianity. They have professed to derive from the humble and unambitious Teacher of righteousness a religion of pomp and power, a religion abounding in long processions and glittering rites, a religion which clothed its ministers with the most despotic temporal power, stationing kings at their stirrups and princes at their feet. How is it that Christianity has been so completely changed ? It is not that the letter of our Lord's instructions is not plain enough. It could not be plainer. Nothing could be more explicit than his reiterated injunctions of lowliness and humility, and the uniform

example which he set of these virtues. How then, I ask again, has Christianity been so entirely transformed ? It is because men, filled not with the pure spirit of truth but with a low and earthborn spirit, have preconceived the idea that religion must be outwardly showy and dazzling ; and what they have set out with conceiving religion ought to be, *that they have made it* ; and the explicitness of the letter of the Bible has put no obstruction in the way of human ignorance and passion, except when the Scriptures have fallen into honest and fearless hands, as they did when they fell into the hands of Luther. So at the present day it is in vain to say that if the Bible were not so obscure, if St Paul had written more clearly, Christians would agree better. As I observed before, let the Scriptures be ever so clear, if men are cherishing a low and earthly spirit then religion will be low and earthly, the clearness of the letter notwithstanding.

The Epistles of Paul, whether they are obscure or not, are not then the causes of the folly and bigotry that disgrace the religious world. I do not deny that they may give occasion to much of the prejudice and narrowness of mind that prevail. But then they are no more answerable for these than a man falling accidentally into the way of a maniac and being murdered by him is to be charged with the bloody excesses into which the madman plunges. It requires some patience to hear so distinguished a man as the great Apostle of the Gentiles spoken slightly of, when his services have been so valuable, and when his writings abound in the most comprehensive views and liberal sentiments and the most beautiful touches of moral feeling. Chris-

tianity was corrupted very soon and very grossly. But it would have been corrupted still sooner and still more grossly, had it not been for St Paul. Mr Jefferson says somewhere in his Correspondence, that 'St Paul corrupted Christianity. I believe he says, that he was the Coryphaeus of its corrupters ! He was the grand instrument in the hands of God of rescuing it from the Judaizing Christians, who constituted a large body in the primitive church and to whom even St Peter a personal disciple of Jesus gave way. They would either have restricted Christianity to the Jews, or have sent it forth among the Gentiles burthened with Jewish rites and Jewish exactions. But St Paul fearlessly and faithfully asserted the universal love of God. 'In Jesus Christ,' said he, 'neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love,' i. e. in the eye of Christianity it is no matter whether a man is a Jew or a Gentile ; has he that faith which demonstrates itself by works of love ? Was this corrupting Christianity ?

If men would take up the Scriptures not with minds actuated by a narrow spirit and laboring under some low and unworthy bias, but simply to find out the truth, to ascertain what the Bible does actually teach, what St Paul really wrote ; if this were the temper of the Christian world, how soon would error, violence and absurdity disappear. The sacred writers would be understood, and there would be no more doubt as to what constitutes the substance of the New Testament, than there is about the main subject of any other book, the Iliad of Homer for instance. Every one who studies the Scriptures in this spirit, so far from complaining

that they are so obscure, wonders that exposed as they are to so many causes of obscurity they should be on the whole so clear ; and adores that Wisdom, that has given to a dark and ignorant world a revelation of truths so sublime, in a manner so admirably fitted to the nature and condition of man, so plain that he who runs may read enough for his guidance, if he only throws off his prejudices when he sets out and runs on the highway of truth.

W. H. FURNNESS.

---

EASTERN HOUSES.

[From Jahn's Biblical Archæology.]

Jahn's Biblical Archæology is a very valuable and useful book. It gives an account of Sacred Antiquities, i. e. of the social, political and religious condition of the Jews, on which almost entire reliance may be placed. The author was a German scholar. The translation was made in this country by Professor Upham, now of Bowdoin College, but at the time of its publication an instructor in the Andover Seminary. It is an octavo volume of nearly 600 pages, and may be found at the bookstores. From this work is taken the extract which follows.

' Although the materials for the construction of edifices were originally stone and mud, the inhabitants of the East at a very early period made use of tiles, and do to this day. They were of different sizes, somewhat

larger than those among us. Commonly they were hardened by the heat of the sun merely, but when intended for splendid edifices, as in Gen. xi. 3, they were burnt by fire. *A brick-kiln*, occurs 2 Sam. xii. 13. Nahum iii. 14. Jer. xlivi. 9. Dwelling houses made of tiles dried in the sun seldom endure longer than one generation.

‘In Palestine the houses were every where built of stones, of which there were great numbers in that region. Palaces were constructed of hewn stones, sometimes with stones sawed, sometimes with polished marble. 1 Kings vi. 36. 1 Chron. xxii. 2. Isa. ix. 10. Amos v. 11. The splendor and magnificence of an edifice seem to have been estimated in a measure, by the size of the square stones of which it was constructed, 1 Kings vii. 9—12. The foundation stone, which was probably placed at the corner and thence called the corner stone, was an object of particular regard and was selected with great care from among the others. Ps. cxviii. 22. Isa. xxviii. 16. Matt. xxi. 42. Acts iv. 11. 1 Pet. ii. 6.

‘The square stones in buildings, as far as we can ascertain from the ruins which yet remain, were held together not by mortar or cement of any kind, except indeed a very little might have been used, but by cramp-irons. The tiles dried in the sun were at first united by mud placed between them, afterwards by lime mixed with sand to form mortar. The last sort of cement was used with burnt tiles, Lev. xiv. 41, 42. Jer. xlivi. 9.

‘The walls even in the time of Moses were commonly incrusted with a coat of plaster, Lev. xiv. 41, 42, 45, and at the present day in the East the incrustations of this kind are of the finest execution; such was that in

the palace of the Babylonian king, Dan. v. 5. Wood was used in the construction of doors and gates, of the folds and lattices of windows, of the flat roofs, and of the wainscoting with which the walls were ornamented. Beams were inlaid in the walls, to which the wainscoting was fastened by nails to render it more secure, Ezra vi. 4. Houses finished in this manner were called ceiled houses and ceiled chambers. Hagg. i. 4. Jer xxii. 14. They were adorned with figures in stucco, with gold, silver, gems, and ivory. Hence the expressions, ivory houses, ivory palaces, and chambers ornamented with ivory. 1 Kings xxii. 39. Ps. xlv. 8. Amos iii. 15.

'Houses at first were small, afterwards larger; especially in extensive cities, the capitals of empires. The art of multiplying stories in a building is very ancient, as we may gather from the construction of Noah's ark and the tower of Babel. The houses in Babylon were three and four stories high, and those in Thebes or Diospolis in Egypt, four or five stories. They appear to have been low in Palestine in the time of Joshua; an upper story, although it may have existed, is not mentioned till a more recent age. The houses of the rich and powerful in the time of Christ were splendid, and were built according to the rules of Grecian architecture.

'Many of the larger houses were tetragonal in form, and enclosed in a square area. They were lately denominated by a word of Persian origin which according to Jerome, in whose time it was still used, signifies enclosed houses, built with turrets and walls. The roofs of the houses were flat, such as are still seen in the East.

They were formed of earth heaped together, or in the houses of the rich, of a firmly constructed flooring made of coals broken up, stones, ashes, chalk and gypsum, reduced to a solid substance by the application of blows. The declivity of the roof from the centre to the extremity is very small, hardly an inch in ten feet. On those roofs which are covered with earth herbs sometimes spring up, and spears of wheat and barley, but they soon perish with the heat of the sun. The Orientals often ascend these roofs, to enjoy a purer air, to secure a wider prospect or to witness any event which happens in the neighbourhood. In the summer they sleep upon them, but not without a covering. They even erect tents and tabernacles upon them; they also spread their flax and cotton there to be dried by the sun. They ascend their roofs, moreover, to talk with a person privately, to witness a public solemnity, to mourn publicly, and to announce any thing to the multitude, to pray to God, and to perform sacrifices. 2 Sam. xi. 2. Mark xiii. 15. Josh. ii. 6. 1 Sam. ix. 25. Judg. xvi. 26, 27. Is. xv. 3. Jer. xix. 13. xlvi. 38. Matt. x. 27. Acts x. 9. The roofs are surrounded by a breast work or wall, to prevent one from falling, which is as high as the breast. On the side next a neighbor's house it is lower, in order that if the houses are near and of the same altitude the occupants may pass from one to the other. The railing or wall of the roof was required by a law of Moses, Deut. xxii. 8.

The gate or door, opening to the streets, is in the middle of the front side of the house. Hence in Arabic it is called the *centre*. The gates not only of houses but of cities were customarily adorned with the inscrip-

tion, which according to Deut. vi. 9. xi. 20, was to be extracted from the law of Moses. The gates were always shut, and one of the servants acted the part of a porter, Acts xii. 13. John xviii. 16, 17.

' The space immediately inside of the gate is called the porch, is square, and on one side of it is erected a seat for the accommodation of those strangers, who are not to be admitted into the interior of the house. In this porch, or contiguous to it, are the stairs which lead to the upper stories and the roof of the house.

' From the porch we are introduced, through a second door, into the quadrangular area or *court*, which is denominated the centre, 2 Sam. xvii. 18. Luke v. 19. The court is commonly paved with marble of various kinds. In the centre of it, if the situation of the place admits, there is a fountain. The court is generally surrounded on all sides, sometimes however only on one, with a cloister, peristyle or covered walk, over which, if the house have more than one story, is a gallery of the same dimensions supported by columns and protected by a balustrade to prevent one from falling, 2 Kings i. 2. Large companies are received into the court, as at nuptials, circumcisions, &c. Esther i. 5. Luke v. 19. On such occasions a large veil of thick cloth is extended by ropes over the whole of it to exclude the heat of the sun; which is practised at the present day, Ps. civ. 2. Luke vii. 6. Mark ii. 4.

' The back part of the house is allotted to the women, called in Arabic the *harem*, and in Hebrew by way of eminence *the palace*. The door is almost always kept locked, and is opened only to the master of the house, 2 Kings xv. 25. Prov. xviii. 19. White eunuchs

guard the door externally, but maids and black eunuchs only are permitted to serve within. The harem of the more powerful is often a separate building, 1 Kings vii. 8. 2 Chron. viii. 11. Esth. ii. 3. Behind the harem there is a garden, into which the women enjoy the pleasure of looking from their small but lofty apartments. In the smaller houses, which are not made in a quadrangular form, the females occupy the upper story.

'The chambers are large and spacious, and so constructed as to extend round the whole of the open court or area. The doors of the chambers open in the first story into the cloisters, in the second into the gallery. The ceiling is flat; some say arched, but arches do not appear to have been known at a very early period.

'One apartment worthy of notice extends from the interior of the front side into the court, sometimes a considerable distance beyond the galleries and cloisters. Its roof is supported by two columns only, and the front of it has no wall, in order to leave the prospect more free. In this apartment princes receive ambassadors, transact business and dispense justice. The temple of Dagon which was destroyed by Samson was similar, as far as concerned the columns, in its construction. Judg. xvi. 26. It was here that the Saviour seems to have had his trial, Matt. xxvi. 69. Luke xxii. 61, 62. Compare also 1 Kings vii. 7. Esther v. 1. In the winter rooms and houses the windows face the south, in order to render them more warm. They are not furnished with stoves and fire-places as among us. The coals and wood are heaped into a pot, which is placed

in a hollow place left for that purpose in the centre of the paved floor. The smoke escapes through the windows. This method of keeping fires is still practised in the East; Isa. xliv. 16. xvii. 14. Sometimes the fire is placed directly in the hollow place or hearth, in the middle of the floor, Jer. xxxvi. 22.

'There is no mention made of kitchens, or places for cooking, except in Ezek. xlvi. 23, 24. Chimneys for the emission of smoke were not known to the Hebrews. Those of modern construction are the invention of the 14th century. The Hebrews however, like the modern Orientals, had openings in their houses by which the smoke might escape. The word is rightly explained in Hosea xiii. 3, as an *opening in the walls for letting out smoke*, although in other passages it signifies an opening of any kind whatever, and especially a window.

'The doors were valves. They were suspended and moved by means of pivots of wood, which projected from the ends of the two folds both above and below. The upper pivots, which were the longest, were inserted in sockets sufficiently large to receive them in the lintel, the lower ones were secured in a correspondent manner in the threshold. The doors were fastened by a lock, Sol. Song. v. 5, or by a bar, Job xxxviii. 10. Deut. iii. 5. Judges xvi. 3. The bars were commonly of wood. Those made of iron and brass were not used, except as a security to the gates of fortified places or of valuable repositories, Isa. xlv. 2. The lock was nothing more than a wood slide attached to one of the folds, which entered into a hole in the door post and was secured there by teeth cut into it, or catches. Two strings passed through an orifice leading to the exten-

nal side of the door. A man going out, by the aid of one of these strings moved the slide into its place in the post, where it was fastened so among the teeth or catches as not to be drawn back. The one coming in, who wished to unlock, had a wooden key sufficiently large and crooked like a sickle. Judges iii. 25. He thrust the key through the orifice of the door, or key-hole, lifted up the slide so as to extricate it from the catches, and taking hold of the other string drew it back, and thus entered. Keys were not made of metal except for the rich and powerful, and these were sometimes adorned with an ivory handle. A key of this kind, in the days of the Hebrew monarchs, was assigned to the steward of the royal palace as a mark of his office ; he carried it on his shoulder, Isa. xxii. 22. The key-hole was sometimes so large as to admit a person's finger through it and enable him to lift the slide ; in that case he stood in no absolute need of a key to enter, Sol. Song. v. 4.

'The windows look from the front chambers into the court, from the female apartments into the garden behind the house. Occasionally the traveller sees a window which looks towards the street, but it is guarded by a trellis and is thrown open only on the public festivities, Judges v. 28. Prov. vii. 6. 2 Kings ix. 30. Sol. Song ii. 9. The windows are large, extending almost to the floor. Persons sitting on the floor can look out at them. They are wide, not set with glass, but latticed. In the winter they are protected by very thin veils, or by valves through which the light is admitted by means of an orifice, 2 Kings xiii. 17. Over the windows are nails fastened into the walls. They are adorned with beautiful heads, and not only sustain curtains by the aid of a rod ex-

tended from one to the other, but are of themselves considered a great ornament. Hence the propriety of those illustrations drawn from nails, Isa. xxii. 23. Zech. x. 4. Eccles. xii. 11.'

---

THE EXTERNAL CONDITION, AND POLITICAL CONNEXIONS AND SERVICES OF THE HEBREW PROPHETS.

In the early ages of the world we find traces every where of an almost irrepressible curiosity to pry into the hidden things of God, and especially into future events. To prevent the Hebrews from resorting to the wizards and diviners of other nations, it was necessary that they should always have a prophet of their own, raised up from among themselves like Moses, to whom they might go. It was necessary that the true religion should give them what every false religion pretended to give, a succession of prophets or seers. Accordingly Moses said in closing up the Law, 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me ; unto him ye shall hearken.' (Deut. xviii. 15.) He speaks of 'a prophet,' meaning however, as the connexion shows, an unbroken succession of prophets ; or in other words, that the Hebrews should always have at least one true prophet of their own whom they might consult, instead of going after the astrologers, magicians and necromancers of the Canaanites.\*

---

\* The prediction is represented in the Acts of the Apostles, (iii. 22), as particularly applicable to our Saviour ; probably be-

And this prediction was fulfilled. An order of men arose in the Hebrew Commonwealth, who were called Prophets, Seers, or Men of God ; of whose external condition, and political connexions and services I propose to give some account.

We are not to suppose that all to whom the term prophet is applied in the Old Testament were persons who foretold future events. It is given to those who lived on terms of peculiar friendship and intimacy with the Deity ; as in Genesis xx. 7, where God says to Abimelech of Abraham, “For he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live ;” and in the Psalms, cv. 15, where it is said of all the patriarchs, ‘Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.’ The name is also given to those who celebrated the praises of Jehovah in exalted strains of poetry and music, and with their minds in a state of ecstasy. Thus Miriam the sister of Aaron is called ‘the prophetess,’ (Exodus xv. 20.) when she ‘took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances,’ to join in a sublime anthem on the overthrow of Pharaoh. Thus too the company of minstrels whom Saul met is called by Samuel, ‘a company of prophets.’ (1 Samuel x. 5); ‘After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines ; and it shall come pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place, with a

---

cause such was the popular understanding of the passage among the Jews at that time ; or because he is to be regarded as ‘the Prophet’ by way of distinction, being the one to whom all the others looked, and who resembled Moses in more respects than the others did.

psaltery and a tabret and a pipe and a harp before them, and they shall prophesy.\* Again, the name of prophet is given to those among the Hebrews who spake or acted in any capacity under divine influences. Thus the seventy elders who assisted Moses to suppress a sedition are said to have ‘prophesied in the camp,’ (Numbers xi. 26,) merely because moved to it by a divine impulse they exhorted the people to submit.†

I repeat it therefore, we must not suppose that those only were denominated prophets in the Old Testament who uttered predictions properly so called. There were some among them, it is true, who did this; who from time to time to time distinctly foretold impending judgments; and to a few God appears to have vouchsafed glorious visions of the far distant future. These last had glimpses more or less distinct of a golden age under the reign of the Messiah, and these glimpses they announced and recorded at the time, and the record has been preserved and the prediction verified. Still the great majority of those who were called prophets among the Hebrews neither had nor pretended to have any knowledge of coming events, except what they derived from the ordinary sources.

Frequent mention is made in the historical books of

---

\* For a still more striking illustration of this application of the terms prophet and prophesying, see 1 Chronicles xxv.

† Accordingly, in the New Testament one of the most common uses of the term prophet is, to denote those among the first Christians who explained the doctrines of the gospel, or exhorted or comforted the believers, under extraordinary divine impulses and illuminations. (1 Corinthians xiv.)

the Old Testament of the Schools of the Prophets. They do not appear to have been instituted in the beginning, but to have been introduced afterwards, as the want of a regular education began to be more and more felt in the public teachers of religion ; the first that is distinctly alluded to being in the time of Samuel, (1 Samuel x. 5.) Over each of these schools was placed a prophet distinguished for his age, wisdom and piety, as president, who was called ‘father,’ and the disciples or scholars were called his ‘sons,’ or more generally ‘the sons of the prophets.’ Samuel presided over one of these seminaries ; Elijah over another, who was succeeded by Elisha. The sons of the prophets lived together in a society or community, (2 Kings iv. 38. and vi. 1) and were instructed in whatever learning and science was to be had in those days, and in the laws and institutions of the country, and in sacred music. A remarkable illustration is afforded us, in the notices given of these schools, of the power of sympathy in propagating religious fervours. ‘ Yet while they heard others prophesy,’ to borrow the somewhat quaint but forcible language of an old writer on this subject, ‘ there was sometime an afflatus upon them also, their souls as it were sympathizing, like unisons in music, with the souls of those which were touched by the spirit. And this seems to be the meaning of that story, (1 Samuel xix. 20.) where all Saul’s messengers sent to Naoth in Ramah to apprehend David and at last he himself are said to fall a prophesying. For it is probable that the prophecies there spoken of were anthems divinely dictated, or doxologies with such elegant strains of devotional fancy as might also excite and stir up the spirits of the auditors :

as often we find that any admirable discourses, in which there is a cheerful and free flowing forth of a rich fancy in an intelligible and yet extraordinary way, are apt to beget a symbolizing quality of mind in a stander by.\*

It is probable that most of the prophets whose writings have come down to us, and whom God endowed with the power of foreseeing important and remote events, were selected from among those educated in these schools. One exception to this however occurs in Amos, who says of himself, (vii. 14) ‘I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit.’ The manner of life of all the prophets was simple and abstemious; their ordinary dress being of sackcloth, and their ordinary food the fruits of the country and bread and water, and their dwellings such as they could and did erect with their own hands, (2 Kings vi. 1.) The woman of Shunem who entertained Elisha put into the prophet’s chamber only what was plain and absolutely necessary, (2 Kings iv. 10) ‘a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick.’ The same prophet refused the costly presents of Naaman, and inflicted a severe penalty on his servant Gehazi who had clandestinely obtained a part of them, (2 Kings v.) The prophets living in their religious communities resembled in some respects the monks in the Catholic Church; but they do not appear to have been bound by any vow of celibacy, for Samuel had children, and mention is made of the wives of Isaiah (viii. 3) and Hosea (i. 2.)

---

\* Discourse on Prophecy by John Smith. Watson’s Tracts. Vol. IV, p. 346.

Simple however as was the garb, and humble the circumstances of these holy men, they were every where reverenced by the people and respected or feared by the government. They were the philosophers, the divines, the instructers, the historians of their country, and did more probably than all others to prevent the lamp of God from going out in the temple itself. Some of the historical books of the Old Testament appear to be but a compilation from writings of the prophets now lost, to which repeated reference is made, as to original and contemporary documents. Thus it is said, (1 Chron. xxix. 29) ‘Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer.’ And again, (2 Chron. ix. 29,) ‘Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, are they not written in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Abijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer against Jeroboam the seer of Nebat.’ ‘Prophecy, it has been observed before,’ says Milman the eloquent historian of the Jews, ‘prophecy, in its more extensive meaning, comprehended the whole course of religious education; and as the Levitical class were the sole authorised conservators and interpreters of the law, the prophets were usually of that tribe or at least persons educated under their care. Now, however [in the time of Elijah,] they assume a higher character, and appear as a separate and influential class in the state. They are no longer the musicians, poets and historians of the country, but men full of a high and solemn enthusiasm, the moral and religious teachers of the people. The most emi-

nent are described as directly, and sometimes suddenly, designated for their office by divine inspiration, endowed with the power of working miracles and foretelling future events. But setting aside their divine commission, the prophets were the great constitutional patriots of the Jewish state, the champions of virtue, liberty, justice and the strict observance of the civil and religious law, against the iniquities of the kings and of the people.\*

From the beginning they were the firm and consistent friends of popular rights and institutions. Samuel resisted (1 Samuel viii.) until all resistance was unavailing, the sudden phrenzy among the people, which made them clamorous for a king and introduced the first great revolution in the Hebrew polity by placing Saul on the throne. Afterwards also, as they were recognised in the state as divine messengers, and in some respects as God's vicegerents, they were able to stand and actually did stand as a bulwark against the encroachments of arbitrary power. The promise of Moses that there should always be prophets in the land introduced a curious anomaly into the Hebrew law, which was this, that any one who claimed to speak as a prophet of Jehovah should be respected in this capacity, or at least should not be condemned and punished as an impostor until time and events should falsify his predictions. Emboldened by this immunity as well as by their unbounded popularity among the common people, they did not hesitate to carry a fearless spirit into the presence of their apostate kings, and openly denounce the corruptions of

---

\* History of the Jews, Vol. I. p. 227.

government, under the fatal influence of which the glory of Judah was crumbling and mouldering away. When Jehoram king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah consulted Elisha, whether they should go against Moab to battle, the prophet testifies his respect for Jehoshaphat who continued to be a worshipper of the true God, and his contempt for the idolatrous house of Israel, (2 Kings iii. 13.) ‘What have I to do with thee?’ said he to Jehoram. ‘Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look towards thee nor see thee.’ Their counsels however, in trying emergencies and in important questions of state policy, appear to have had great weight in the best days of the monarchy, and even on profligate princes. At the instance of ‘a man of God’ (2 Chron. xi. 2.) Rehoboam abandoned his ambitious projects against Israel, and Amaziah (2 Chron. xxv. 7) broke off an improper alliance which he had contracted with the same people.

Considerable obscurity rests on the history, characters and pretensions of the False Prophets, of whom frequent mention is made in the books of the Kings and Chronicles, and particularly in the accounts given us of the reign of Ahab. Micaiah’s vision of the ‘lying spirit,’ (1 Kings xxii. 21, and 2 Chron. xviii. 20,) can be regarded in no other light than as a symbolical declaration, that God had permitted the four hundred prophets whom Ahab and Jehoshaphat had consulted to be actuated by a spirit, not of truth but of flattery and dissimulation. The large number of men wearing the pro-

phetic garb and pretending to the prophetic character, who could be found on this occasion to act the part of courtiers, and 'declare good unto the King with one mouth,' may perhaps be accounted for by supposing that the national degeneracy had reached at last the educated classes, and those even who had been educated in the schools of the prophets. Dr Cogan supposes the false prophets to have grown up exclusively under the idolatrous institutions of the revolted tribes. 'When the ten tribes revolted, and Jeroboam had introduced the worship of the two golden calves to prevent his subjects from going up to Jerusalem, they did not at the commencement entirely forsake Jehovah. They professed to worship him under these emblems. But the adoption of one custom of the Pagans introduced another, and before they forsook totally the God who brought them out of Egypt they profanely worshipped him with the rites of paganism. The true worshippers of God being permitted to consult the oracle for direction, advice and assistance, the advantage was too great and honorable not to be counterfeited, and these corruptors of the true religion, in the progress of their degeneracy, attempted to consult the oracles of the living God by all those superstitious modes of divination, enchantments, and even cruel and horrid rites which characterised idolatry. They also converted their influence over the people into an engine of political power; making it subservient to their own interests, by complying with the desires of the people, and favoring the ambition of their sovereigns. So great was their progress in apostacy from the true worship, that they learned all the tricks of diviners and soothsayers of the

heathens, and then attempted to persuade the ignorant among both princes and people, that they were inspired by the God of heaven.\*

These apostates, by their numbers, influence and dark and insidious policy, did not a little to hurry on the moral and political ruin of their country. One of the principal objects of the true prophet was to expose and counteract their machinations; which he did often successfully, always firmly and courageously, as in the case of Micaiah to which allusion has just been made; and also in Jeremiah's treatment of Hananiah, the prophet of Gibeon, (*Jeremiah xxviii*). But as the ancient strictness of manners declined, and with it the spirit of religion and genuine patriotism, the character and pretensions of the true prophets inspired less reverence; less regard was paid to their admonitions and warnings; rivals and pretenders not unfrequently succeeded in supplanting them in the public confidence and favor, and sometimes even in exciting against them a furious and sanguinary persecution. They are the martyrs referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 33, and seqq.), who 'had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy.' At the same time we must not suppose, that the true prophets were incapable of error or disobedience, or that they were in fact sinless. The account given us of the 'man of

---

\* *Theological Disquisitions.* Vol. I. pp. 279, 280.

God' (1 Kings xiii.), who was slain by the lion as a punishment for his guilty compliances, is evidence that there were cases in which they had occasion to utter over each other's fall the old prophet's pathetic exclamation, 'Alas! my brother!'

In speaking of the political connexions and services of the prophets, we must not forget the indirect influences which they must have exerted in the state, in their capacity as public teachers and guides in virtue and piety. I hardly need say, that the holiness which they inculcated far exceeded, both in spirituality and extent, the negative morality of the decalogue and the 'beggarly elements' of the Levitical code. Their style and manner, if we judge them by the didactic portions of the prophetic books which have come down to us, 'were perfectly adapted to the character of those rude times and to the capacities and conceptions of an ignorant and perverse people, while they possessed an elevation suited to the cause which animated their breasts, soaring far beyond compositions merely human. To conquer the prevalent insensibility of this people, they borrow images and illusions from every part of nature, from every habit and custom with which the people are most familiar, and which were most correspondent with their prevalent ideas. As powerful hurricanes will rouse chaff and dust from the earth to a height that creates sublimity, thus did the impetuous earnestness of their expostulations give an elevation and grandeur to images most adapted to the comprehension of the populace, without stooping to a refined attention to the materials of which they were composed. Sometimes, with an indignant tone and in sarcastic language, they pour

contempt upon the folly of “ saying to the work of men’s hands, Be ye our Gods.” Sometimes they attempt to alarm and terrify by a denunciation of judgments; and to inspire reverential awe, by representing the Creator of all things in the plenitude of his power and insuperable majesty. At others, their counsels, reproofs, admonitions, were delivered in such pathetic strains of eloquence, as must have effected every mind that was not callous to the influence of moral suasion.\*

I shall conclude with mentioning one other political or national object, for which the prophets appear to have been raised up, and which they nobly strove to accomplish. It was to save their countrymen from a miserable and reckless depression of spirits; to preserve among them a proper sense of their privileges and hopes as God’s chosen people, and to revive from time to time a confidence in the glorious and splendid destinies of their race. This became more and more necessary as calamity and distress thickened and darkened over their devoted country. The sceptre was departing from Judah, and Shiloh had not come. Then it was that the glorious company of prophets stood up and told of the dawning of a better day, in language and imagery which must have stirred their inmost souls. Who can read the predictions contained in the sixteenth chapter of Isaiah without thrilling in sympathy with the feelings of joy and triumph it must have awakened in the almost heart-broken Jew? ‘The prophet,’ to borrow the language of one of the most eloquent of the old English writers,—‘the prophet, elevated by the spirit

---

\* Logan’s Theological Disquisitions. Vol. I. pp. 301, 302.

of God to a view of after ages as clear as if present, seems here to find his people sitting under a dark mantle of a sad and tedious night, and having long expected the sun's return in vain before its time, they give over expectation when it is near them, and desperately fold themselves to lie perpetually in the dark. Now the prophet, as it were, standing awake upon some mountain, perceives the day approaching and the golden chariots of the morning of deliverance hastening forward, and seems to come speedily with these glad news to a captive people, and sounds this trumpet in their ears, Arise, shine, for thy light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee !'\*

J. WALKER.

## EXAMINATION OF SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES.

It must be perceived that this work contains frequent and abundant references to Scripture. Book, chapter, and verse are mentioned. The object of this particularity is, not only to enable but to induce the reader to examine these passages, and see how far they support or are illustrated by the remark in connexion with which they are cited. I beg leave to recommend this practice, in relation to other books as well as the Interpreter. When a reference is given to a passage in the Bible, be at the trouble of looking it out and consider-

\* Archbishop Leighton's Select Works. Vol. I. p. 43.

ing the propriety of the quotation. There are several advantages that will grow out of the custom.

1. It will enable us to verify or to correct the opinion of the author whom we are reading respecting the meaning of any passage or its pertinency to the subject of which he is speaking. We may often think he is wrong on one or both of these points;—that he has mistaken the sense of the verse to which he refers, or that if he appears to have understood its true meaning he has given it an application which it will not bear. As we should use our own judgment in the interpretation of Scripture and not slavishly follow any one however learned or pious, we should examine the authorities on which the decision of another is acknowledged to rest, and where we cannot agree with him, either decide against him or keep our minds in suspense till we shall be better able to determine which is right.

2. Such an examination will fix the instruction which the writer is giving in our minds. We shall remember it longer from the time we have spent in considering it, and it will more often occur to us from being associated with the words which we have found in the Bible.

3. This is one of the best methods of gaining an acquaintance with the contents of the Bible, and of rendering its language familiar to us. We shall not at once forget what we have taken the pains to seek out and study.

4. It is also an aid in learning and retaining the true sense of Scripture. Every such comparison between a reference and a text is like part of a commentary or exposition; and we may be thus laying up in

our memories a collection of notes on Scripture, that will be of great service to us in our future reading or conversation.

5. This practice is a good discipline for the mind. It forms habits of attention and accuracy, prevents our falling into that way to which all of us are so prone—of reading carelessly, and by obliging us to institute comparison and exercise our judgment encourages a thoughtful and independent use of our mental powers.

I need not suggest any other benefits. These are enough to recommend the practice to our observance. Instead therefore of thinking the page encumbered by such references, we should be glad that the writer has pointed out the grounds of his opinion and required us to examine and decide for ourselves, or has enabled us to give vividness and strength to our acquaintance with the sacred writings.

---

*The Sermon on the Mount.*

13 You are the salt of the earth; now if the salt lose its savor, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, except to be cast out 14 and to be trodden upon by men. You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot 15 not be concealed. Nor is a lamp lighted and plac-

ed under a measure, but on a stand, where it giv-  
16 eth light to all the household. Thus let your light  
shine before men; that they seeing your good  
works may glorify your Father who is in heaven.  
17 Think not that I have come to overthrow the  
law or the prophets; I have not come to overthrow  
18 but to complete. For verily I say to you, sooner  
shall heaven and earth perish than one iota or one  
stroke be taken from the law before its end is  
19 accomplished. Whoever therefore shall break one  
of the least of those commandments and shall teach  
men to do so, will be least in the kingdom of hea-  
ven; but whoever shall obey and teach them, he  
20 will be great in the kingdom of heaven. For I  
say to you, that unless your righteousness shall ex-  
cel that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you cannot  
enter into the kingdom of heaven.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Vs. 13—16. If we consider these comparisons as addressed to those who then regarding Jesus as the Messiah were to be the future teachers of his religion, we shall perceive their pertinency and force. The present tense ('ye are') is used here perhaps, as often in the language of prophecy, for the future.

V. 13. Great use is made of *salt* in the East, to preserve meat from putrefaction.—That salt can *lose its savor* was ascertained by Maundrell an Englishman who visited the Holy Land in 1697, and who in describing the Valley of Salt a few miles from Aleppo says, 'I broke a piece [of the salt,] of which that part that was exposed to the rain, sun and

air, though it had the sparks and particles of salt, yet it had perfectly lost its savor.' It is said, that a kind of 'insipid salt was brought from the Dead Sea, and sprinkled in wet weather instead of sand over the slippery way that formed the ascent to the temple.' If this was done in the time of Christ, his illustration must have appeared peculiarly apt.—The meaning is ;—You, my disciples, are by your teaching and lives to preserve the world from moral corruption ; now if you become corrupt, what means are there of instructing and reforming you ? If you do not preserve purity of doctrine and life, alas for you and for mankind. You will deserve only to be despised by men and 'cast out' of your office by God.—Our Lord appears to have used this comparison on other occasions ; see Mark ix. 50, Luke xiv. 34.

V. 14. You are to be the instructors of mankind. Christ was called 'the true light, which lighteth every man' (John i. 9,) and Jesus describes John the Baptist as 'a burning and shining light' (John v. 35.) Paul affirms of the Philippians Christians that they 'shine as lights in the world' (Phil. ii. 15.) So we say of illustrious men, that they are 'the lights of the age.'

'A city seated on a mountain.' There were towns in Palestine thus situated. The disciples would from the peculiarity of their religion as well as the nature of their office be conspicuous or subjects of observation, and should remember that their conduct would be noticed.

V. 15. '*A measure.*' The Greek word, translated 'bushel' in the common version, was the name of a measure containing about a peck. As we have no word of exactly equal import, it is better to use the general term.—The disciples of Jesus should be desirous to shed light over society,—should diffuse their religion, and especially make it a means of enlightening others through its influence on their own characters. See other examples of this comparison in Mark iv. 21 and Luke viii. 16, and in Luke xi. 33.

V. 16. '*Thus let, &c.*' The connexion is with what precedes; *thus*, i. e. as the lamp gives out light, so do you illuminate the world.

'*May glorify your Father.*' To *glorify* here signifies not only to praise, but to acknowledge in his various relations of supremacy, beneficence and holiness. See a similar use of the word and a repetition of the sentiment in 1 Pet. ii. 12. See also Rom. i. 21 and 1 Cor. vi. 20, and 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

Vs. 17—20. It was important that Jesus should give in this stage of his ministry a correct impression respecting the estimation in which he held the law of Moses and the whole Jewish dispensation. It would be a natural inquiry of those who looked on him as the Messiah,—how far he would alter any of the institutions of their religion; and as he was now about to expose the false constructions and bad practices of the Pharisees, who had labored to make the people believe that their traditions were interwoven with the substance of the law and could be contemned only at the expense of that reverence which every Jew owed to the religion of his fathers, the declaration of Jesus, that he came not to *overthrow*, or abrogate, but to confirm, enlarge, fulfil, and in one word to *complete* what former messengers of God had said and done, was timely if not necessary.

V. 18. '*Verily.*' The Greek word is *amen*, the same which is used at the close of prayer. It is a word of affirmation, signifying the certainty of what is said, or the speaker's conviction of its truth and importance. In our Lord's discourses its meaning is—truly; (compare Matt. xvi. 28 with Luke ix. 27;) but as this translation would not probably express its full force to most readers, it is better to retain the old scriptural word—verily.

V. 18. It is not possible to convey the true meaning of this verse through a literal translation, such as is given in the common version. Luke gives the sense of the passage, (see Luke xvi. 17;) 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass

than one tittle of the law to fail.' It was probably a proverbial form of speech to signify the continuance or the certainty of a thing, to say that heaven and earth—the creation should sooner pass away or perish. Our Lord uses it again, Matt. xiv. 35.

'One iota or one stroke?' This also was a proverbial expression. *Iota* is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet; a *stroke* (or tittle, as it is commonly rendered) is part of a letter, one of the strokes which were made in forming it, and on the accuracy of which often depended the meaning of a word, as many of the Hebrew letters very nearly resemble each other, as for example, *ב* and *בָּ*, *נ* and *נָ*; *ד* and *דָּ*. The Rabbins were accustomed to say that a change of one of these marks would ruin the world; because it would alter the divine commandments. Jesus intimates that he had as sincere and entire a respect for the law as they, though his sentiment was far higher and broader than theirs.

'Be taken'; 'be expunged' or 'become invalid' might be preferred, if the words were in more familiar use.

'Before its end is accomplished?' The Jewish law would continue in force until its several parts had answered the ends for which they were designed, whether to prepare the way for a better dispensation or to educate men for another life.

V. 19. *Those commandments*; i. e., the commandments of the Mosaic law; not the instructions which follow. That this is the meaning seems to me clear from the connexion; and such a construction is supported by the charge which Jesus brought against the Pharisees of 'transgressing the commandment of God by their tradition,' Matt. xv. 3, 6.

'One of the least of those commandments,'—not 'one of these least commandments,' as King James' translators render it, though in Matt. xxv. 40, 45 they translate the same form of expression 'one of the least of these.'—The Pharisees made a distinction between greater and less com-

mandments. Jesus declares the necessity of obedience to every divine command, and affirms that in his kingdom, under the reign of the gospel, the only rank would be that of comparative merit in view of this requisition of universal obedience.

V. 20. The *Scribes* or ‘doctors of the law,’ were those persons who made the Hebrew Scriptures their particular study, and expounded them to the people in the synagogues or to their pupils in the schools. As most of them belonged to the sect of Pharisees, by ‘Scribes and Pharisees’ in the Gospels are not meant two distinct classes of men, but those who agreed in holding opinions which some of them made it their business to teach. The Pharisees professed to pay special regard to the divine commandments and claimed peculiar respect on the ground of personal character. Jesus exposed their hypocrisy and showed that their righteousness was formal and external. See Matt. xxiii. 23—28. The *righteousness*, or goodness, of his disciples must be of a higher character,—sincere and universal.—There is a saying of a somewhat later age recorded in the Jewish books, that ‘if but two men were to enter into the kingdom of heaven, one of them would be a Pharisee and the other a Scribe.’ The sentiment of this vain assertion existed in the time of our Lord, and we may imagine how his declaration in this verse must have astonished his hearers.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Christians now are ‘the salt of the earth’ and ‘the light of the world.’ They must instruct and purify mankind. The example of every Christian should be a continual lesson of goodness. His character will be seen and felt, he must do good or harm. ‘No man liveth,’ no one can live, wholly ‘to himself.’ He must exert an healthful or an injurious influence upon the

community in which he lives. They especially who enjoy peculiar means of religious knowledge, or who are enabled by their situation to become emphatically teachers of righteousness, should consider the nature of the responsibilities under which they are placed. They must be the guardians of purity of faith, manners, sentiment and conduct. If they be unfaithful to themselves and their fellow-men, if they from whom we may most confidently expect bright examples become the slaves of error and sin, they forfeit perhaps irretrievably the distinction which God conferred on them. ‘If they shall fall away,’ how shall it be possible, ‘to renew them again unto repentance?’

2. Let it be remembered that we promote the glory of God by doing his will. By our good works we may bring men to acknowledge and serve our Father in heaven. They who are the spiritual children of God are brighter reflections of his character, and will draw others to him with more cogency of persuasion, than all the displays, numerous and splendid as they are, which he has made of himself in the outward creation.

3. It is important that we should understand and consider the relation between Christianity and Judaism, which our Lord has here noticed. They are parts of one system—the system of divine revelation, of religious teaching, which God from the first determined to introduce and ‘in the fulness of time’ to complete for man. The Mosaic dispensation was divine in its origin and perfect in its authority. The gospel proceeds on the supposition of its divine authority, the admission of its great truths, and the adoption of its laws of universal character. Jesus Christ pulled down or overthrew nothing but the traditions of human folly. He directly repeal-

ed nothing; but gave an extent and added a force to the fundamental principles of the Jewish religion, which rendered its ceremonial and national peculiarities unnecessary. They fell of course when they were no longer wanted. When the edifice which it was the work of ages to erect was completed, its foundations made so strong and its dimensions so ample that all people might be received into it, the temporary supports and the meander accommodations of earlier periods would be neglected. Still they had a purpose, and not one of them would fall to the ground till all occasion for its use had ceased. In other words, Christianity did not violently take the place of Judaism; for it was only the completion of that which began with the patriarchs, was under the direction of Jehovah carried on by the hand of Moses to a state in which it long remained, was repaired and enlarged by the prophets as God saw fit to send them for this work, and was brought to its end and perfection by him who was greater than Moses and the prophets. This unity of the divine revelations—this singleness of plan running through the whole Bible is an idea full of instruction, and seems to me of very great importance towards a correct understanding either of the Scriptures or of the divine government.

4. Our righteousness may resemble that of the Pharisees. If we confine it to a punctilious observance of certain duties or to an *exterior* piety or morality, we cannot be true Christians. The disciple whom Jesus will receive into the mansions of eternal life is ‘he who in an honest and good heart having heard the word keeps it and brings forth fruit’—the fruit of improvement and usefulness, of which the root is love in the heart.

## TRANSLATION AND EXPOSITION.

MATTHEW v. 21—32.

*Part of the Sermon on the Mount.*

21 Ye have heard that it was said to the men of former times, Thou shalt not commit murder, and whoever shall commit murder will be liable to punishment by the judges. But I say to you, that every one unreasonably angry with his brother will be liable to punishment by the judges, and whoever shall call his brother fool will be liable to punishment by the Sanhedrim, and whoever shall call his brother 22 wretch will be liable to the torment of fire. Therefore, if thou bring thine offering to the altar and there remember that thy brother has any cause of 23 complaint against thee, leave thine offering there, before the altar, and go, obtain first a reconciliation with thy brother, and then return and present thine offering. Come to an agreement with thine opponent at once, while thou art going along with him, lest thine opponent deliver thee up to the judge, and the judge deliver thee over to the officer, and thou be 24 thrown into prison. Verily I say to thee, thou canst not come out thence till thou hast paid the last farthing.

25 Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that every one looking on a woman to cherish unlawful desire

for her has already committed adultery with her in  
29 his heart. If then thy right eye tempt thee to sin,  
pluck it out and cast it from thee ; since it is better  
for thee that one of thy members should perish than  
that thy whole body should be cast into torment.  
30 And if thy right hand tempt thee to sin, cut it off  
and cast it from thee ; since it is better for thee  
that one of thy members should perish than that thy  
31 whole body should be cast into torment. It has  
been said also, that whoever would repudiate his  
32 wife should give her a bill of divorce. But I say  
to you, that whoever repudiates his wife except for  
incontinence causes her to commit adultery, and  
whoever marries her after she is repudiated commits  
adultery.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In the translation of these verses I have adopted a different rendering from that of the common version in many instances in which that fails to express the true or full sense of the original. A translation, to be either just or clear, must often approach to paraphrase. A literal or verbal rendering may be a false one ; and yet there is constant danger of going so far the other way as to confound translation with exposition, though their provinces are widely distinct. The notes, it is hoped, will explain whatever is not made sufficiently clear in the translation.

V. 21. ‘*To the men of former times :*’ To, not by. Our Lord now proceeds to illustrate his remark that he came ‘to complete the law and the prophets,’ and also to show the justice of the censure which he cast on the Scribes and Phar-

isees when he said to his disciples that unless their ‘righteousness’ were of a higher character they could ‘not enter the kingdom of heaven.’ He therefore quotes both the commandment of Moses and the tradition which the teachers of the law had made explanatory of it, or, as Lightfoot says, ‘the words of Moses clothed in the glosses of the Scribes;’ though the reference to the latter is not always in express words, but may be gathered from the nature of his own exposition of the sin which he condemns.

‘*Thou shalt not commit murder.*’ In the English translation of the Old Testament, ‘*Thou shalt not kill.*’ Exodus, xx. 13.

‘*Punishment by the judges.*’ By the Greek word which I have thus rendered an inferior class of tribunals is pointed out, which probably existed in the time of Christ according to the description given by Josephus, who inaccurately ascribes the particular form of the institution to Moses. ‘Let there be seven men to judge in every city, and these such as have been before most zealous in the exercise of virtue and righteousness. Let every judge have two officers allotted him out of the tribe of Levi.’ (Antiq. B. iv. C. viii. S. 14.) The Talmudists i. e. the Jewish writers of the 3d and 4th centuries after Christ, speak of a court of twenty-three judges, but the authority of Josephus must be preferred. These local tribunals had the power of examining ordinary offences, and of inflicting lighter kinds of punishment.

V. 22. ‘*Unreasonably angry,*’ i. e. either without or beyond reason,—without a sufficient cause or to an immoderate degree.

‘*His brother,*’—his fellow-man. Some commentators say, his fellow-disciple, any other christian believer; because in the Acts and the Epistles Christians are called brethren. (See Acts xv. 22, 23, 1 Cor. vi. 5, 6, and many other passages.) But the spirit of Christianity is too large to be circumscribed by any narrower limits than those of the human

family. All men in its view are brethren. (See our Lord's parable of the good Samaritan, Luke x. 30—36.)

**'Fool.'** The word 'Raca,' which occurs in the original at this place, though of frequent use among the Jews, was of foreign, of Syriac or Chaldaic origin. It was a term of bitter contempt. Simpleton, dolt, or idiot, might be a word of similar force—thou stupid, empty creature.

**'The Sanhedrim'**, was the highest tribunal among the Jews. It was established in the time of the Maccabees, about 150 years before Christ, and consisted of seventytwo members who were taken from the chief-priests, i. e. those who had been high priests and the heads of the twentyfour classes into which the priesthood was divided, the elders, i. e. the heads of tribes and families, and the scribes, i. e. the men who studied and expounded the law. They held their sessions in Jerusalem, and decided all cases which came before them either by appeal or as subject from their importance to the original jurisdiction of this court. In the time of Christ they were allowed to pass sentence of death, but the execution of the sentence rested with the Roman governor. This tribunal is often mentioned in the New Testament. It was the Sanhedrim by which Jesus was condemned.

**'Wretch.'** The original Greek has in its primary sense nearly the same signification as we have given to 'Raca.' But it is plain from the connexion that it was a more opprobrious appellation. It has therefore been supposed that it expressed abhorrence for the moral as well as contempt for the intellectual character of the person to whom it was applied ; as the term 'fool' in the Old Testament is used to denote an impious or wickedman. (See Psalm xiv. 1, and throughout the book of Proverbs.) The word 'wretch,' I believe, is used in our language to represent one whose mental and moral condition are alike deplorable.

*'The torment of fire.'* See the next article, on the meaning of the word 'gehenna.'

V. 22. Our Lord, in presenting examples of a higher morality than was embraced in the traditions of the Jews or even in the law of Moses, adduces first the commandment respecting murder, and declares that a man might merit severe punishment without taking the life of another. To make this more clear and impressive he refers to the judicial system of the Jews, and mentions three offences of frequent occurrence, each of which fell vastly below the crime of murder; which yet, he says, so rose above one another in gradations of wickedness, that they would, if such sins were cognizable by courts of justice, subject the transgressor to the different degrees of punishment known among the Jews. These expressions are not therefore to be understood literally, for our Lord did not describe in them the administration of justice which then prevailed, but by comparisons familiar to those whom he addressed he illustrated the truth, that they might commit grievous sins concerning which their teachers had been silent. Unjust or immoderate anger, contemptuous epithets, and passionate reproach were in fact breaches of that law of social duty, every violation of which was an offence of greater or less magnitude against the Supreme Lawgiver and Judge. The remark of the apostle John may be quoted in this connexion, 1 Epist. iii. 15. 'Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.' See also Ephes. iv. 26.

V. 23. Jesus goes on to exhibit still farther the nature of the sentiment with which every human being should be regarded, but only the grossest violations of which were noticed by the Jewish teachers; and by taking such a case as he supposes in this verse, he pointedly reproves the Pharisees who taught that ritual observances were of superior importance to works of justice and kindness.

*'Thine offering.'* Probably a free-will sacrifice or gift. See Levit. i. 2, Matt. xxiii. 18.

V. 24. '*Obtain first a reconciliation.*' Not only 'be reconciled'—cherish kind feelings thyself, but satisfy thy brother by confession or explanation, and so secure his forgiveness and friendship.

V. 25. Our Lord urges the culture of that spirit which he was recommending by considerations of prudence. Having shown in the previous verses that the indulgence of resentful or malevolent feelings was a crime, and that the exercise of a conciliatory disposition should have precedence even of acts of worship, he now shows that a regard to one's own immediate interest should prompt him to a similar course of conduct. The whole paragraph, beginning with the 21st and ending with the 26th verse, thus relates to one subject, viz. the culture and manifestation of benevolent sentiment.

*'Come to an agreement with thine opponent,' &c.* The terms refer to legal proceedings. When a man is compelled by one who has a complaint against him, whether for debt or for any other cause, to go before the magistrate, it is his best course to settle the matter as they go along (see Luke xii. 58) that he may, in the words of Luke, 'be delivered from' the adverse party, and not be brought before the tribunal which would treat him with the severity of the law and not permit him to escape till he had made full satisfaction. Not only a prompt regard to the rights but a willingness to yield something to the demands of another is better than an obstinate resistance, which will only involve one in trouble and expense.

V. 26. '*The last farthing.*' I retain this translation of the Greek name of a very small brass coin which the Jews are believed to have adopted from the Romans, because it represents its value more nearly than any other term that could be chosen. The *codrantes* or *quadrans* was the least

piece of money in circulation excepting the *lepton* or mite, two of which were equal to one quadrans; (see *Mark* xii. 42.)

Vs. 27—31. Jesus here gives another example of the superiority of his teaching over that to which the Jews were accustomed. He declares that the mind and heart must be free from impurity, and that unchaste thoughts are criminal though they be followed by no act which either the law of Moses or the traditions of the Pharisees condemned.

V. 27. *Exod. xx. 14.* The words rendered in the common version—‘by them of old time’—are not considered genuine in this place, not being found in a sufficient number of the best manuscripts.

V. 28. ‘*To cherish unlawful desire.*’ The original (the infinitive of the verb with the preposition) expresses the intention, and not the consequence alone. He who voluntarily or purposely inflames his licentious desires, though he may not commit any offence against the laws of society, is regarded by Him who sees the heart as if he were guilty of open wickedness.

Vs. 29, 30. See the same instructions in *Matt. xviii. 8, 9*; also *Mark ix. 43—48*. Jesus shows the great importance of self-denial and abstinence from sin by these expressions, which are not to be interpreted to the letter, but as forcible modes of presenting the truths, that the senses, the appetites, and in a word our whole nature should be kept under strict government lest we fall into sin, and that any loss should be preferred to the loss of virtue. Compare *Coloss. iii. 5*, and *1 Cor. ix. 27*; also *Galat. v. 24*.

V. 29. ‘*Tempt thee to sin.*’ This is the meaning of the original and the meaning required by the connexion. The language of the 28th verse, ‘every one looking,’ may have suggested the illustration adopted in this verse.

Vs. 31, 32. Jesus having quoted the commandment of Moses and given a far broader view of duty than had been

held up to the Jews by those who explained this part of the law, quotes one example of the manner in which it was practically regarded, and contrasts with their customs the stricter principles which he would inculcate. The Jewish doctors seem to have given an unusual share of attention to the subject of divorce. The law of Moses respecting it may be found in Deut. xxiv. 1. On the interpretation of this law the Rabbins were divided, one school maintaining that divorce was lawful for the slightest cause—even the mere preference of the husband for another woman, and another school contending that divorce was justifiable only where the wife had been unfaithful to her husband. The practice among the Jews, as we might suppose where such a dispute prevailed, was exceedingly loose. See what our Lord says farther on this subject in Matt. xix. 3—9 and Mark x. 2—12; also Luke xvi. 18.

V. 31. The literal rendering of this verse would be, as in our Bibles, ‘whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her,’ &c. Such a form of expression is harsh, even if it be correct, in English. Yet it may be thought that a different translation does not so clearly express the idea which was meant to be prominent, viz. that very little impediment or ceremony stood between a husband’s will and the expulsion of his wife from her home.

‘*A bill of divorce.*’ This was a writing (according to the tradition) of twelve lines, stating in substance that on a certain day the writer had of his own will dismissed and divorced his wife, leaving her free to follow her own wishes. It was subscribed by witnesses and delivered to the woman.

V. 32. Here also our Lord’s expressions are not to be interpreted to the letter. The meaning is, that since divorce should never take place except for immorality, he who dismisses his wife for a less cause, though she should not be again married, exposes her to the danger of an un-

lawful connexion, and he who marries her under such circumstances disregards the relation which morally if not legally exists between her and the husband who for an insufficient reason gave her a bill of divorce. See what St. Paul says, in Rom. vii. 2, 3, and 1 Cor. vii. 11, 39.

## PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. We again observe that the bold and original character of our Lord's instruction, as it presents a remarkable contrast alike to the spirit and to the manner of the teaching which prevailed among the Jews before and during and after his ministry, furnishes an argument for his inspiration the force of which can hardly be resisted by a candid mind. Whence came this superiority, not only to the Rabbins at whose feet even a Paul was willing to sit, but to the 'men of former times' whose sayings were embalmed in tradition? 'Was it from heaven or of men?' To this question they who are learned in ancient wisdom and they who have studied their Bible alone must return the same answer. This wisdom, this morality, this doctrine was from above. Observe too the tone in which he speaks, 'as one having authority.' 'Ye have heard that it has been said, but *I* say unto you.' Who is this that utters his opinions as if they were the edicts of infallible truth? Is this a Jew of humble birth and narrow education, who suddenly emerges from obscurity to lift his voice in opposition to public sentiment and to place himself above those who had made the law their study and its exposition their employment? He only who was conscious of a divine illumination would have presumed, would have

been able, to speak in that tone of *calm decision* which distinguished the teaching of Jesus, when he was overthrowing the authority of the Scribes and Pharisees.

2. A comparison between the morality taught by Jesus Christ and that practised in the Christian world will show perhaps as great a difference as we notice between his lessons and those of the Jewish doctors. Men who bear the christian name entertain as narrow and low views of social duty as were common in Judea eighteen centuries ago. The overt act, the outward crime, the offence against which no eye can be shut is condemned ; but the sins of the tongue and the sins of the heart, the passion which pollutes the lips with falsehood or profaneness and the passion which burns within the bosom—how few rebuke either in themselves or in others. Yet our Master has shown that he who commits these sins incurs an awful amount of guilt and exposes himself to heavy punishment.

3. It is of the first importance that we understand and reverence the spirit of these instructions. The teaching of Jesus made the heart its particular object. The temper, the thoughts, the passions, the appetites, these all were brought under its notice. Respecting them it declared that restraint and purity were the only conditions of virtue. This truth we must feel, and make it our great business to govern ‘the inner man,’ that nothing may taint or inflame the soul, and no secret violation be permitted of that love which is the fulfilling of the law.

4. How clearly are we directed to the exercise of justice, kindness and gentleness. Intemperate feelings and abusive language are contrary to the religion into

which we have been baptized. Reparation of injuries, a prompt and frank confession of error, and earnest endeavors to remove and as far as possible to prevent all ground of complaint by others, are duties of the plainest obligation on the Christian; and while he neglects them, his attendance on the forms of piety will be of little benefit to himself and of little value in the judgment of Heaven.

Let children be reminded of the wickedness of an irritable temper. Let them be taught that it is better to forgive than to retaliate, and to ask forgiveness than to increase a fault by refusing to acknowledge it. Let them be informed of the character of that practice, into which children are so liable to fall—the foolish and pernicious practice of ‘calling names.’

5. Be it remembered by every one that the strictest chastity is required of the Christian; a chastity that reaches to the desires and thoughts. Oh, guard the young from licentiousness, you to whose care they are committed, as you would save their souls from ruin. Keep the heart free from this vice; for he whose heart is corrupt, though neither his conduct nor his speech betray the secret pollution, is a profligate, whose character is rotten at the core.

6. Remember, in fine, that it would be infinitely better to part with limb or life, with every earthly possession and hope, than to sacrifice your virtue. Keep it with more care than you would keep ‘the apple of your eye.’ Part with it on no solicitation; lose it not by a moment of negligence; yield it not to any assault.

## MEANING OF THE WORD 'GEHENNA.'

As the meaning of this word has created much discussion, and some explanation of my reasons for the manner in which I have rendered it may be proper, I have translated Schleusner's\* remarks under the word *gehenna*, omitting only his interpretation of particular passages, and shall quote the examples of its use in the New Testament, that the reader may see how far I am justified in my opinion of its meaning.

' Gehenna, a word of Hebrew origin, which properly signifies the valley of Hinnom, being compounded of the Hebrew word for valley and of the name of the owner of the valley. *The valley of the Sons of Hinnom* was a delightful spot, shady and well watered, near to Jerusalem on the east and the brook Kedron on the south, where the Jews had set up the brazen image of Moloch, which had the face of a calf and the extended arms of a man, and to which the idolatrous Jews, according to Rabbi Kimchi on the authority of the old Rabbins, sacrificed not only pigeons, turtle-doves, lambs, rams, calves and bulls, but even their own children. See 1 Kings xi. 7. 2 Kings xvi. 3, 4. In the prophecies of Jeremiah, vii. 31, this valley is called Tophet, from a Hebrew word signifying a drum, because the priests in celebrating those horrid rites beat drums that

---

\* Schleusner is the author of a Lexicon or dictionary to the New Testament, in which the different meanings of every word are given, and supported by examples. Though not free from error, it is generally considered superior to any other similar work.

the cries of the children who were consumed in the flames might not be heard by the by-standers. After this horrible custom was abolished by Josiah, the Jews having returned to the purer worship of God, (2 Kings xxiii. 10,) are said to have regarded the place with such abhorrence that they not only made it the common receptacle of rubbish and filth, but threw into it the carcases of animals and the unburied bodies of those who had been capitally punished ; and as constant fires were necessary for their consumption lest the air should become pestilential and as worms were always to be seen feasting on the remains, it came to pass, that not only any very severe punishment and particularly disgraceful kinds of death, but also that most wretched condition of extreme and perpetual torment to which the wicked are subjected after death in company with the demons, and hence hell itself, was designated by the word Gehenna, both by the Jews and by Christ and his Apostles.'

From this account of the origin and use of the word, it appears that it was at first the name of a place, that afterwards in consequence of the purposes to which that place was devoted it came to signify disgraceful or terrible punishment, and thence was easily made to denote the condition of the wicked after death.

In this statement almost all commentators agree, and yet it must be confessed that it is rather a probable account of the gradual change in the meaning of the word than one which is or can be supported by ample proof. Few persons, it may be presumed, are aware that *gehenna* is used but twelve times in the New Testament, or that it is found neither in the Septuagint—

the Greek translation of the Old Testament, nor in the Apocrypha, nor in any classic Greek author. It is primarily and exclusively a Jewish term, and was used only by our Lord in addressing Jews and by the Apostle James in his Epistle 'to the twelve tribes.' To ascertain its meaning we must attend to the examples of its use in the New Testament, and borrow what light we may from our knowledge of the opinions which the Jews in our Saviour's time entertained of a future life. Little advantage can be derived from any other source.

Our acquaintance with the opinions held by the Jews respecting another life is very imperfect. Some facts however are clear. In the law of Moses the doctrine of a future life is not introduced, nor do we find any traces of it in the Old Testament till long afterwards. If any intimations of it occur before the Babylonish captivity, they are very indistinct. In the later Prophets we discover less doubtful marks of such a faith. From the Gospels it is plain that the Pharisees and the majority of the people who adopted their tenets were then believers in another life and in a future state of punishment. This belief seems therefore to have grown up by insensible degrees, to have been nourished if it was not sown in the Jewish mind during the captivity in the East, from which the Jews brought home the germs of many notions that did not reach their maturity till after the age of Jesus, and to have become a distinct and common doctrine at a period earlier than our Lord's advent. Now as they would naturally select their most expressive term to describe punishment in another life, since it must have been regarded as a condition of extreme misery, they could choose none more significant

than *gehenna*, the valley of Hinnom, which it is universally admitted was an emblem of extreme temporal suffering. This indeed does not amount to proof, but where the poverty of materials prevents our adducing proof either for or against an opinion, a probable explanation is entitled to some regard. If it be taken as correct, there are four senses in which the term *gehenna* might have been used by our Lord or his hearers. 1. As the name of an infamous place near Jerusalem; 2. As an emblem of extreme temporal suffering; 3. As an emblem or name of future punishment; 4. As an image of misery, both in this and the future life, i. e. as an expression of exquisite suffering or heavy punishment in general.

To determine in which of these senses the word was used by Jesus we must examine the passages in which it occurs. They are so few in number that I may quote them at length, in the words of the common version. Three of them are found in near connexion in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matt. v. 22. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.

Matt. v. 29. If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Matt. v. 30. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

The sentiment of the two last verses is repeated in the 18th chapter of Matthew: in one instance the expression 'everlasting [aionion] fire,' is substituted for *gehenna*; the other is as follows.

Matt. xviii. 9. If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into *hell*-fire.

The examples that may next be cited are the parallel passages in Mark.

Mark ix. 43, 44. If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into *hell*, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Mark ix. 45, 46. If thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into *hell*, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Mark ix. 47, 48. If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into *hell*-fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

The two next examples should be read together. They are parallel passages in two of the evangelists.

Matt. x. 28. Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in *hell*.

Luke xii. 4, 5. I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall

fear : Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into *hell* ; yea, I say unto you, fear him.

The critical scholar should remark that the word rendered soul in the verse from Matthew is *ψυχή*.

One other example, as I conceive, of a similar use of the word occurs in Matthew.

Matt. xxiii. 33. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation [condemnation, judgment, or punishment] of *hell* ?

In all these instances, ten in number, the main, the essential if not the whole idea seems to be that of extreme suffering—a punishment of the most severe kind. The reader can judge whether any limitation of the punishment in regard either to place or time is expressed.

Only one further example remains of the use of *gehenna* by Christ.

Matt. xxiii. 15. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte : and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of *hell* than yourselves.

This is universally considered a Hebraism. A child of hell is one worthy of hell, or of *gehenna*, i. e. of the severest punishment.

The New Testament contains one text in which this word is found.

James iii. 6. The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity : so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature [or of life] ; and it is set on fire of *hell*.

Here *gehenna* must be understood in its etymological sense—the valley of Hinnom ; or with a slight increase of meaning—the fire of that valley, which was

notorious as the emblem of condign punishment, such as could be merited only by the vilest malefactors.

From these examples taken in connexion with what has been already said, I think it appears that the idea conveyed to the mind of a Jew in the time of Christ by the word *gehenna* was that of intense and disgraceful suffering—the most dreadful kind of punishment, whether in this world or the next according to the nature of the subject. In the first place where we meet with it, viz. in Matt. v. 22. the connexion requires us to interpret it of temporal punishment. Jesus was describing three gradations of crime meriting three degrees of punishment, the two first of which were unquestionably experienced in this life, and both the nature of the offence and the character of the passage (which may be termed *scenical*) require us to explain the last in a similar manner. In the two next passages (Matt. v. 29, 30) though there may seem to be an allusion to the previous use of the word in verse 22d, yet in both the historical and the epistolary books of the New Testament we find the same word used in different senses within a very short distance, and I apprehend that as the connexion does not here as in the first case oblige us to limit its meaning, we ought to understand it in the general sense of extreme punishment.

The question now arises,—is the English word *hell* an equivalent expression? It seems to me very plain that it is not. *Hell* is universally and exclusively used in our language (excepting when it is figuratively transferred to some scene or condition in this life) to represent the state of the wicked after death. Unless therefore *gehenna* is meant to signify exclusively suffering or

punishment in another life, it cannot be rendered by *hell*. To define a general term by one of partial signification is certainly wrong. Have we then any word in English that will exactly express the force of the Greek? I believe not; for we have none that suggests that idea of its origin which was also included in the word *gehenna*. Unless we adopt this term into our language, we must be satisfied with giving the idea which it was made the instrument of conveying, viz. extreme and excruciating punishment. The word *torment* I have thought preferable to any other for this purpose, and have therefore used it in the translation.

It may not be impertinent to remark for the sake of those readers who are not familiar with the Greek Testament, that '*hell-fire*' is a translation of two words—*gehenna* and the genitive of the Greek word for fire.

---

## THE POETICAL PARTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

A knowledge of the principles of the Hebrew Poetry would open a new source of interest and gratification to many readers of the Old Testament, and impart a new attraction to many noble passages. It is of the nature of poetry to require that it be read *as such* in order to the full comprehension and relish of its excellence. It has essential properties distinct from those of prose, which give pleasure because they are regarded as poetical, but which seem to be out of place, if they do not give disgust, when regarded as part of a prose

composition. There is a certain style of sentiment and of diction appropriate to poetry, which ceases to give pleasure when used in prose. Those who read the poetical parts of the Old Testament as if they were prose insensibly lose from this cause a part of the pleasure they are adapted to impart. They do not see and appreciate much that is peculiar in them, and which if perceived would attract their admiration and delight.

Thus much would be true, even though the translation retained no traces of the metrical structure of the original. But it does retain such traces ; and herein it differs from the translations made, or capable of being made, from any other language. A translation of the Iliad or Æneid into English prose retains no mark whatever of the original style. It has no peculiarity to distinguish it from any other prose, or to show that it was not translated from a prose original. Yet the knowledge that it was a poetic original is necessary to account for the train of sentiment and the selection of words and images ; and it enables the reader to derive a pleasure—an effect perhaps on the imagination, which as mere prose it could not have imparted. The prose translation of Klopstock's Messiah is read as poetry ; and would not please as it does were it read as prose. The poems of Ossian translated by Macpherson would be another example in point, if they were *bona fide* versions ; as it is, they serve none the less to illustrate my remark.

But, as I hinted, more than this is true of our translations from the Hebrew. They retain palpable traces of their poetic origin. The structure of the Hebrew verse was such that it cannot be lost in translation. The

structure of the English sentences is unavoidably and necessarily marked by that peculiarity which Lowth calls the *parallelism*, and which is one of the most remarkable characteristics of the Hebrew poetry. While the Greeks and Romans constructed their verse by certain arrangements of long and short syllables which necessarily disappear in translation, the Hebrews constructed theirs by certain parallelisms of sentences which necessarily reappear in translation. The essence of verse in the former case laid in the words; in the latter, in the sentences. The latter therefore is capable of being transferred to another tongue; which is not the case with the former. A literal translation of the *Odyssey* does not prove that Homer wrote any thing but prose; a literal translation of *Job* proves beyond doubt that the original was poetry.

But this fact must be in the mind of the reader in order to his deriving the greatest satisfaction from it. Poetry, if one would receive its characteristic and complete gratification, must be read with immediate cognizance of its artificial structure and attention to its rhythmical movement. Otherwise it is robbed of its sweetness and grace, and becomes perhaps little better than stilted prose. Who does not know how much of the charm departs from a fine poem when recited by one who pays no regard to the march of the verse and the arrangement of the pauses? Without its rhythm, what is poetry better than prose? Now the essential rhythm and pauses of the Jewish poetry are retained in our version; but if one do not know the fact nor advert to it in reading, he reads as if it were prose, and thus fails of receiving the pleasure which an attention to its

metrical structure would impart. Yet I apprehend that the majority of readers are precisely in this state. They do not consider that the songs of Moses and David, the book of Job, and the larger portions of the Prophets, are poetical, and that their poetical structure is discernible and palpable even in their English dress. If they did they would read them as poetical compositions, with a new and higher interest, and a new and higher perception of their wonderful beauty. I have witnessed a case in point. The book of Job has been published within a few years by Mr Noyes in an amended version, and in a manner to exhibit on its very front its metrical arrangement. The consequence has been that many have found in it a charm which they never perceived before. They have read it with eagerness and delight. Something of this is doubtless to be attributed to the greater perspicuity of the new version, and to the helps for understanding it which are furnished in the notes. But it is no less certain that much is to be ascribed to the new perception of its poetical character, and to its being read consequently in that state of mind in which poetry must be read in order to its being appreciated.

• What I have here remarked of the readers of Job, I have found equally true of the readers of Isaiah in Lowth's version. And I infer from it, universally, that in proportion as the poetical character of those and other books is more distinctly observed and considered, in the same proportion the interest and gratification in their perusal will be increased.

H. WARE, JR.

## UNITY OF SENSE.

[From Benson's Works.]

In the 4th volume of Watson's Tracts may be found an 'Essay concerning the unity of sense, to show that no text of Scripture has more than one single sense,' which Bishop Watson says 'is prefixed to Dr Benson's Paraphrase on St Paul's Epistles,' meaning however only in the later editions. George Benson D. D. was a dissenting clergyman of England in the last century, and was for several years the associate of Dr Lardner. He published 'A Paraphrase and Notes in imitation of Mr Locke's manner' on those Epistles of Paul which Locke and Peirce had omitted and on the seven Catholic Epistles, 'A History of the First Planting of the Christian Religion,' and other works. I have taken from the 'Essay concerning the unity of sense,' the introductory sentence, the statement of the principle for which he intends, and the replies which he makes to objections; omitting only the first of these objections, which does not seem worthy of the notice that he has given it, and some remarks under the objection marked here vi., in which I do not concur, and which are not necessary to the argument.

'In all other authors besides the Scriptures, before we sit down to read and study them, we expect to find in them one single, determinate sense and meaning of the words; from which we may be satisfied that we

have attained to their meaning, and understand what they intended to say.

Words without a fixed meaning convey no doctrine ; and in effect contain no revelation at all. Antecedent to one's opening the Bible, if one was told that it was a revelation from God, one would expect that the doctrines essential to salvation should be expressed clearly ; because men are concerned to understand and believe them : that the rules of practice or the precepts of a holy life should have a single and determinate meaning ; because men are concerned to understand and practise them. For if their sense were dubious, the practice formed upon them could not be steady and uniform. The promises should be clear and express, because they are to influence men as motives to obedience ; and the threatenings should be intelligible and their meaning fixed, because they are to deter men from sin and disobedience. The rules of divine worship ought to be express and determinate, and the language of our worship clear and intelligible ; otherwise, we might as well worship in an unknown tongue. For all divine worship ought to be entirely in subordination to moral virtue, or true holiness. And it cannot influence God in our favor unless it influence us to a holy temper and life. But what has no certain meaning cannot be expected to edify us, or to have any good and proper influence upon us. The sacred history should be plain and intelligible ; because it relates the most interesting events, events of public concern and great importance to mankind.

We justly condemn the answers of the heathen oracles as riddles, dark and obscure, vague and indeter-

minate, capable of being turned many ways, without certainly knowing which sense was intended or in what way they are to be understood. But divine prophecies should be intelligible, and have one determinate meaning ; that it may be known when and how they are accomplished. We admire it as an excellence in Homer and other celebrated writers of antiquity, that their meaning is expressed clearly ; and may not we expect when God speaks to men that his meaning should be expressed in as clear and determinate a manner ?

In one word, if the Scriptures are not to be interpreted, like the best ancient authors, in their one true and genuine meaning, the common people will be led to doubt whether or no the Scriptures have any certain meaning at all. They will be forever at a loss what to believe and what to practise, upon what to ground their comfort here and their hope of everlasting salvation hereafter.

By all that has been said I would not be understood to intimate that all texts are to be interpreted alike. No ! general expressions must contain a number of particulars under them ; though particular expressions must be confined and limited to particular cases. All texts are not to be interpreted in the literal sense ; nor all texts in the allegorical or figurative sense. What I contend for is, that every text has only one meaning ; which when we have found we need inquire no farther. Literal passages ought to be interpreted literally, figurative passages figuratively. Historical narrations are to be understood historically ; and allegorical passages ought to be interpreted allegorically. In parables, the fact is nothing but as it illustrates or inculcates the

moral or application. In figurative or allegorical passages, the thing alluded to in the figure or allegory is only to enliven or illustrate what is said. And he would act as unreasonable a part who would interpret figurative expressions literally, as he who would interpret literal expressions figuratively. The obvious and grammatical, or the rhetorical and figurative sense of the words, the time and place, the character and situation of the speaker or writer, and the relation which any passage has to his main view or to the connexion, will in most cases lead an interpreter easily to distinguish history from parable or allegory, and literal representations from such as are mystical or figurative. And the judgment of a true critic or faithful interpreter of holy Scripture will very much appear therein. But fancy and imagination are boundless; and no rules nor limits can be set to them.

Objections with their answers.

Object. 1. ‘Several texts of Scripture are difficult; and it is dubious which is the true sense: must you not there allow of double senses?’

Answer. When a difficult text is considered and the person who attempts to explain it is dubious which is the true interpretation, he may very rationally give all the senses which carry any appearance of probability, with the reasons for each interpretation, and leave it to his readers or hearers to judge which is the true sense. But in that case there is but one true sense. And his not being able to ascertain what that is can be no proof of the text’s being originally intended to have more significations than one.

Object. II. ‘Do you not allow of types and shadows? or that persons and actions under the Old Testament were types of Jesus Christ, or of something under the Christian dispensation? And if you allow of types, you must allow of double senses in some texts; or that some passages of Scripture besides their immediate and direct meaning had also a further, i. e. a mystical or typical signification?’

Answer. I acknowledge that God was the author of both dispensations, viz. ‘the law of Moses,’ and ‘the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;’ that before he put either of them in execution he had the plan of both clear in his own mind; that in several things there is a resemblance between them; and that God not only foresaw that resemblance, but also intended it; that wherever the law or the prophets have declared that the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic constitution were intended to point out a moral obligation, or to pre-figure the Messiah or something in the Christian dispensation, there that moral intention or prophetic pre-figuration is the one, true sense of the text. But where neither the law nor the prophets have pointed out such an intention, there the resemblance between the two dispensations could not be discovered till the events which bear a resemblance to former things were come to pass. Then indeed such a similitude would illustrate such events; intimate that the two dispensations had one and the same author; and facilitate the spread of Christianity among the Jews. But discerning that resemblance between the two dispensations must arise from having them both before us, and comparing the

one with the other ; and not from the double sense of any text of Scripture in the Old Testament or in the New.

As to types, in the common acceptation of that word, there were several under the Old Testament. (See Isai. xx. 1, &c. Jer. xiii. 1, &c. and xviii. 1, &c. and xix. 1, &c. and xxiv. 1, &c. and xxvii. 1, &c. and xxviii. 10, &c. and li. 63, 64. Ezek. ii. 8, &c. and iii. 1, &c. and iv. 1, &c. and v. 1, &c. and vii. 23, and xii. 1—20, and xxxvii. 1, &c. Hos. i, 2, &c. and iii. 1, &c. Zach. xi. 7, &c.) In this sense also our Saviour's cursing the barren fig-tree was typical of the destruction of the nation of the Jews, who had leaves but no fruit, made a great show and profession of religion without bringing forth the fruits of holiness and righteousness. (Matt. xxi. 18, &c. Mark xi. 12, &c. with which compare Luke xiii. 6, &c.) And so was Agabus's taking up St Paul's girdle to bind his own hands and feet, in order to foretell that the apostle should be so bound at Jerusalem. (Acts xxi. 10, &c.) In all these cases it is evident that the design was, by such persons, things or actions to pre-figure such and such future events. And the typical sense there is the one, true sense of the place ; as any one may see by examining the several passages with any tolerable care and attention.

Object. III. 'Are not many passages in the New Testament taken from the Old Testament, and used in a quite different sense from what they have as they stand in the original writer ? And must not these be called double senses of the words of sacred Scripture ?'

Answer. It is acknowledged that our Lord and his

apostles and evangelists have taken several passages from the Old Testament ; and used them in a very different sense from what they have as connected with the place from whence they were taken. But that will not prove a double sense of the words. I may quote a passage from Homer or Virgil, Herodotus or Livy, to express my present meaning, and in quite another sense from what it has in those ancient authors. But that will not prove that those ancient authors intended their words should be understood in two senses. In the original intention they had only one meaning. In my accommodation of them they had only one meaning. And though the same words may have different ideas affixed to them, and be used by successive speakers or writers in various senses ; yet that does not prove that in the original intention they had more than one signification.

Object. iv. ‘ Is not the Epistle to the Hebrews a strong proof of double senses ? And has not the author of it abundantly shewn, that in the spiritual meaning of the law of Moses was contained the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ? ’

Answer. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has argued very justly ; as will plainly appear, when the design of his writing is attended to, and his argument clearly understood.—The Hebrew Christians were in danger of apostatizing from the gospel, and of returning to the Jewish religion again. And they were induced to that change, partly out of fear of persecution from the unbelieving Jews, and partly by the subtle arguments which they alleged. Besides proper arguments to support them under persecution or the prospect of it, the

apostle answers the arguments of the unbelieving Jews, and that very solidly, q. d. ‘ You prefer the law of Moses as more excellent than the gospel of Christ. But let us compare them together, and see wherein they resemble one another and wherein they differ. And from such a comparison it will appear, that in both respects the gospel has the advantage. And will you go back from a better dispensation to a worse ? Was the law given by angels ? The gospel was given by our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of the angels and to whom they are all in subjection. Was Moses, the servant of God, the great Jewish lawgiver ? A greater and more excellent person, Jesus, the Son of God, is the great Christian lawgiver. Did Joshua give the people of Israel rest after they had passed through the wilderness, and settle them in the land of Canaan ? That was not the final rest ; for king David spoke of another rest long after, even the final rest of God’s people, which Jesus will give us in the heavenly Canaan, and which is perfect and durable. There remaineth therefore that everlasting rest for the people of God.—Had the Jews a succession of mortal men for their high priests ? Jesus Christ is our great high priest, and is not succeeded by any, but has an unchangeable priesthood ; a priesthood which resembles not that of Aaron, but of Melchizedec, who was both king and priest of the most high God, who is not represented as coming of any priestly descent, nor as succeeded by any priestly line. In like manner, Jesus Christ is actually both king and priest, not descended from any priestly line, nor has he any successor in his high office and dignity. — Have the Jews had a tabernacle or temple, in which

their priests used to minister ? Jesus Christ is gone into the holy of holies ; and is a minister of the true, the heavenly, tabernacle or temple. The law had only the shadow, the rough draught, or imperfect delineation, of good things to come. The gospel has the substance, and contains those very good things themselves.— Did the Jews offer the sacrifices of bulls and goats ? Jesus Christ has offered himself as a sacrifice ; and by that one offering has perfected for ever those that are sanctified.—In short, whereinsoever the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ resemble one another, there the gospel has the preference : whereinsoever they differ, there also the gospel is more excellent. And would any wise man go from a more excellent dispensation to one that was evidently much less excellent ?

All this must be allowed to be very just reasoning. But wherein does it favor double senses, or double interpretations, of holy Scripture ?

Object. v. ‘What ! would you limit the wisdom and power of God ? When God speaks to men, he can take in a large compass ; and can easily comprehend more in one sentence, or one word, than short-sighted, mortal men can do in a whole volume of the most profound, elaborate or comprehensive writing !’

Answer. The matter now in debate is not what God can do, but what he has done. Whatever God can do ; whenever he has made a revelation to men, he has always seen fit to reveal his mind and will in such a familiar, condescending manner, as to use words and phrases in the sense in which they were commonly used at the time and in the place where such a revelation was first given. And indeed if he had done otherwise,

men could not have understood him. And revelation not understood would be no revelation at all.

But this objection may be turned just the other way; and it may be said to them that make it, 'What! would you limit the wisdom and power of God? When God speaks to men, will you represent him as speaking with the obscurity or equivocation of an heathen oracle? Cannot he speak the language of any age or country in so clear and intelligible a manner as to have one certain and determinate meaning, so that his words may be understood and his will complied with? Will you allow Homer or Herodotus, Xenophon or Livy, to express themselves clearly and distinctly? and cannot the wisdom and power of God equal, or excel the most plain and intelligible of all the writers of antiquity? What method therefore can now be taken to interpret any passage of Scripture, but to consult the original, to examine it according to the rules of grammar, rhetoric, and close attention to the age and country, customs and language, of that time and place, the character of the speaker or writer, and of the persons addressed to or spoken of, and the scope and connexion of the whole discourse? When God speaks to men, he certainly knows how to speak to their apprehensions. And such is his goodness, that one may reasonably expect that he will do so.'

Object. vi. 'Do not you too much confine the sense of the sacred writings? and suppose the design and meaning of the apostles to be less general than it seems to have been? Or, in other words, do you imagine that the apostolic Epistles were written only for the use of the churches or persons to whom they were address-

ed, or to whom they were first sent ? Or how far do they concern Christians in all ages and countries whatever?"

Answer. I look upon this to be a question of very great moment, and which deserves a most careful consideration.

All the books of the New Testament (except the Revelation of St John) seem at first view to have been merely occasional writings ; designed for some particular persons or churches, or at the most for some particular countries.

St Matthew's Gospel is said to have been written for the use of the Jewish Christians, more especially in Judea ; to leave among them, when the apostles were going to preach among the Gentiles. The Gospel of St Mark was written at the request of the brethren at Rome ; and more immediately for their use and benefit. St Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the apostles seem to have been the first and second part of the same book, inscribed to Theophilus, and perhaps written at his request, to inform him of the first beginnings of Christianity and of the progress which it had made. And Theophilus is thought by some to have been the governor of a province in Greece ; or some great man whom St Luke had converted to the Christian faith. St John's Gospel was written at the request of the Christians at Ephesus ; and as a supplement to the other three Gospels. And the several Epistles were evidently written to particular churches or persons, as occasions then required, and more peculiarly suited to their circumstances.—So far were the books of the New Testament occasional writings.

But, if St Matthew's Gospel was written in Hebrew, for the use of the Hebrew Christians (as some suppose,) it must have been translated for the use of the Hellenist and Gentile Christians. And the present Greek does not carry any marks of a translation. St Matthew therefore might possibly publish it both in Hebrew and Greek. But however these things be, as it was published in Greek it must have been designed for the benefit of Christians in general. And if the brethren of Rome requested it of St Mark to write his Gospel and had it first, others had it afterwards. And it became of public benefit to the Christians in general; for whose benefit it was calculated, as well as that of St Matthew.—St Luke's inscribing his Gospel and the Acts of the apostles to Theophilus might possibly be no more than our dedicating a book to some person of eminence; when the book is nevertheless intended for the use of the public.

St John's writing his Gospel at the request of the brethren at Ephesus, and that as a supplement to the other three Gospels, is a plain proof that the other three Gospels were then common among the churches and well known to the Christians; that St John's Gospel was intended to be as public; and finally, that the primitive Christians were not indifferent about what their Lord had said and done, but had an ardent desire to know as much as they could with certainty of the doctrine, life, actions, and sufferings of that dear and eminent person.

The apostolic Epistles were not circular letters, addressed to the Christian church, or to all Christians at large; but were undoubtedly written upon some partic-

ular occasions, and addressed to some particular churches or persons. But they nevertheless spread into other churches, and were valued and read by other Christians. St Paul expressly ordered some of his epistles to be read publicly ; and that not only in the churches to which they were written, but also in other churches.—St Peter had read the Epistles of his beloved brother Paul ; not only those written to some of the churches in Asia Minor, but to other churches also.—It was doubtless with a view to their being known and distinguished from any epistles which might be forged under his name, that St Paul wrote the salutation with his own hand at the end of all his Epistles.

The four Gospels and the Acts of the apostles seem to contain all the essential parts of the Christian religion. But the Epistles contain things useful, and of very great moment. The excellent laws which Solon gave the Athenians contained the substance of all their laws ; but yet the Athenians found it proper to add many particular laws, as elucidations of Solon's general rules.—The laws of the twelve tables at Rome contained in a narrow compass the substance of the Roman law ; but they found it requisite to add many particular laws to illustrate and explain those of the twelve tables.—The ten commandments contained the sum and substance of the Mosaic law ; but yet God saw fit to add many particular precepts, to explain and enforce the observation of the ten commandments.—And finally, 'the law of Moses' contained the rules of the Jewish religion and government ; but yet God saw fit, by the prophets from time to time to give that nation many particular precepts for enforcing, explaining and illustrating the law

of Moses.—In like manner, the four Gospels and the Acts of the apostles contain a summary of the Christian doctrine and precepts. They direct us to believe in God ; and in Jesus Christ, as the Messiah and Saviour of the world. They inculcate the necessity of repentance, where men have done amiss ; and of prevailing holiness in all. But they do not always apply these general directions to particular cases so minutely and circumstantially as do the apostles in their Epistles.

The four Gospels give an account of the ministry of John Baptist, and of our Lord, of the twelve apostles and of the seventy disciples ; with what they said and did as preparatory to the setting up the kingdom of the Messiah in the world. The Acts of the apostles contain the history of erecting the gospel-kingdom. In the Epistles several things are cleared up, which are but briefly hinted in the Gospels and Acts of the apostles. They were written by different persons at various times and upon different occasions ; and yet they all agree in the doctrines and precepts, and confirm the main facts, viz. that Jesus died and rose again, ascended into heaven, and poured out the spirit, and thereby imparted the knowledge of the gospel unto mankind, and many miraculous powers in attestation to the Christian doctrine.

It might be expected that the religions which had been long in possession would obstruct the progress of the gospel, and that the votaries of each would have their peculiar objections. Accordingly, we find in the Epistles that the Jews and Heathens did actually make such objections ; and we see also in what manner the apostles have answered them, and that the nature of

the gospel and its evidences were such and so glorious, that it speedily made its way against various and powerful opposition. The first professors, and more especially the first preachers, of the gospel might expect persecution from several quarters. The Acts of the apostles and their Epistles inform us that they were actually persecuted, and let us know how they behaved and what supported them under such hardships and indignities.

By having Christianity set in such different lights, and the objections of those who first opposed it so clearly and fully answered, we are enabled much better to understand Christianity in its great extent and glorious evidence ; to clear up such difficulties as would otherwise have been insuperable, and to defend it against all its adversaries.

By shewing what pure Christianity was at the beginning, we are able much more clearly to point out what it ought now to be, and what are the corruptions of it in later ages ; and we have thereby the proper means in our hands of shewing which way a reformation might be effected. And when and where Christianity is professed in its purity, by having the authentic and original records of its primitive glory and perfection, we can the better maintain the purity of it and prevent future corruptions.

Some indeed have applied passages in the Epistles to Christians of all ages, which were designed only for some Christians and in some particular cases : but that is one of the abuses of holy Scripture, against which we are here guarding mankind. What might be a proper rule to persons indued with miraculous powers,

can be no rule to us who have no such powers. And yet even such passages are of service now-a-days; as they are a clear proof that in the primitive church there were such powers, and consequently the most glorious evidence attended Christianity when it first made its appearance in the world. Epistles written to churches where the apostles had many and bitter enemies, and which contain appeals to such churches that such spiritual gifts and miraculous powers had been communicated by them and did then subsist and abound, contain arguments of a peculiar kind in favor of the truth of the Christian religion. For if there had been among their converts no such spiritual gifts and miraculous powers, their enemies would not have failed to have insulted them and triumphed over them: and Christianity must in a short time have sunk as a most notorious imposture.

It has been already observed that the apostolic Epistles were not circular letters, nor catholic epistles, originally written to all Christians; and equally suited to the cases and circumstances of all Christian churches, at all times and in all places. The general doctrines and precepts do indeed equally concern all Christians. And the apostolic Epistles, which were written to particular churches or persons and exactly adapted to their case, are fairly applicable to the cases of all churches and of all Christians, as far as their cases are like those of the persons or churches to which they were originally addressed.—This is not confining their meaning; nor extending it, as I apprehend, beyond what the apostles designed, or beyond the intention of that sacred spirit by which they were guided and directed in

all that they spoke or wrote relating to the doctrine of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To conclude : It appears to me that a critical interpreter of holy Scripture should set out with this, as a first principle ; viz. ' That no text of Scripture has more than one meaning.' *That one true sense* he should endeavor to find out, as he would find out the sense of Homer or any other ancient writer. When he has found out that sense, he ought to acquiesce in it. And so ought his readers too ; unless by the just rules of interpretation they can shew that he has mistaken the passage ; and that another is the one, just, true, and critical sense of the place.'

---

PAUL'S EPISTLES HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD.

There is hardly an individual who has been accustomed to read his Bible with any tolerable degree of attention, that has not been often prompted to give his hearty assent to the declaration of St Peter, that in the Epistles of his fellow-apostle Paul are ' some things hard to be understood.' We take up the New Testament, and read through its historical and biographical narratives with great interest and delight. We find comparatively little in the Gospels to retard our progress, or to weaken the impression which the narrative was designed to produce. We read with intelligence and profit the simple tale of the miraculous birth, the event-

ful life, the cruel death and the glorious resurrection of our Lord. We can comprehend the explicit precepts which he delivers. We can understand the plain yet sublime truths which he proclaims. We pass on to the history of the enterprise and endurance of the apostles, and in this attractive document we find nothing to regret but its brevity. The frequent harangues of the apostle Paul, which are here recorded, are perfectly lucid and intelligible. It is not till we reach his Epistles, that his sentences become involved, his argument intricate, and his meaning obscure. In passing from the Acts to his Epistle to the Romans, the difference is immediately discovered. We seem to have removed from the broad light of day to a region of perpetual twilight, where the shadows of familiar things are constantly flitting before us, mocking us with their illusive resemblance. From time to time we are able to grasp and detain something that is palpable and real, and when we reach the conclusion we always find much valuable advice and exhortation, expressed in plain language and level to the lowest capacity.

How then, we are led to ask, does it happen that the same writer is so irregular and unequal in the communication of his thoughts, at one time charming the ear and reaching the heart by his felicitous and touching diction, at another by his tortuous expression and complicated discourse confounding the understanding of the wisest and bidding defiance to the conjectures of the most acute? The solution of this question is as complex as the difficulty itself. It is to be sought for in the species of composition, in the character of the writer, in

the circumstances of the age, in the external form of the writings, and in the mode which we employ to ascertain their true import. Of each of these heads I will speak in their order.

I. And first, in what degree is the obscurity of Paul's Epistles produced by the species of composition ? The Epistles of the New Testament are nothing more nor less than *letters*, written for and sent to particular churches or individuals on particular occasions ; and of course they partake of the general character of letters. They should be regarded as letters ; they should be read as letters ; they should be explained and understood as letters. Now if a letter is put into your hands, addressed to some other person, which you are requested to read, the probability is that a considerable part of it you will be unable to understand. And why ? Because you are unacquainted with the character and situation of the writer and of the person to whom it was directed ; you are ignorant of the circumstances under which it was written, and of the occasion which called it forth. There may be allusions to persons and events of which you have never been informed, a reference to a previous correspondence which you have never seen, and a constant presumption of the knowledge of things which have never passed under your observation. Of course your mind will be in a state of uncertainty concerning the import of many passages and expressions. And this uncertainty will be greater or less, temporary or permanent, according to the opportunities which you may subsequently have of becoming acquainted with those circumstances, the ignorance of which has been the whole cause of your doubt and perplexity.

Now the case supposed is precisely parallel to that of the Epistles of St Paul. They are *letters* that he wrote to the churches which he had founded, the condition of which he well knew, and with the members of which he probably had a personal and familiar acquaintance. In writing to them he wrote as to his friends, to men who knew his character, his feelings, his habits. He did not dilate upon every topic which he thought it advisable or necessary to mention. A hint or passing reference would often accomplish his purpose as well as a more formal and detailed statement. It is evident too, that he is often answering questions or removing objections which have been suggested to him by his correspondents in their previous letters, or is referring to inquiries and discussions which had taken place while he was present with them. Now we have very scanty means of information concerning these incidents, except what is furnished by the Epistles themselves; and the consequence is, that in endeavoring to discern the meaning of the apostle we are often obliged to have recourse to conjecture, or submit to the humiliating alternative of acknowledging that our ingenuity can devise no signification that will exactly suit the circumstances of the case. Thus we see that one principal cause why we do not better comprehend the Epistles of St Paul is unavoidable, and in some measure irremediable—inseparable from the nature of epistolary writing.

II. The second cause of the ambiguity that rests on the letters of the apostle to the Gentiles must be sought for in his peculiar character and temperament. He was a man of warm feelings and vivid conceptions. Having a vigorous mind stored with various knowledge,

possessing a great reasoning faculty, and fond of profound and subtle argumentation, in his thoughts rapid and impetuous, in his expressions bold and emphatic, he leaves the impress of his character on every Epistle. He commences writing, full of his subject ; he rushes on for some time in a vehement and uninterrupted strain, till suddenly starting at an idea suggested perhaps by a single word which had unconsciously escaped from his pen, he goes in pursuit of this subordinate thought, and having completely developed it he interweaves it dexterously with the filaments of the main web, and then proceeds to finish his argument as he had at first proposed. The consequence of this is, that his Epistles abound with long and implicated parentheses, and it requires some familiarity with his style to determine their commencement and conclusion. The majority of readers do not distinguish these implicated and subordinate sentences ; they observe those only which are pointed out to them as parentheses by the usual marks. They read on as though the whole was a uniform and connected piece ; and the result is, that losing the train of argument with which the apostle started they are soon brought to complain of his obscurity. They either do not attend to the argument, or they decide that his reasoning is inconclusive, his ideas perplexed and entangled, and his modes of expression awkward and uncouth. Now no imputations can be more groundless and unjust. There is no writer who is more distinct in his conceptions, more determinate in his expressions, or more close and logical in his argument than St Paul. If you do not comprehend his meaning and feel the force of his reasoning, you may be assured

that the defect is more in yourself than in the apostle. You must become acquainted with his character, his habits of thought, his mode of arguing and his forms of expression ; and you will then have removed one of the greatest obstacles to the complete understanding of his writings.

III. A third cause of the obscurity which envelopes the Epistles of St Paul may be found in our ignorance of the opinions, the occurrences, and the posture of affairs, in the age when they were written. To have a distinct and vivid conception of the meaning of any composition, we should place ourselves in the very condition of its author. We should know the time and country in which he lived,—the character of his countrymen, or of those among whom and for whom he wrote—their opinions, their prejudices and their feelings ;—their modes of conception, and the forms of speech in which they expressed their conceptions ;—their modes of reasoning and of illustration. We should become familiar with their ordinary habits and manners. We should endeavor so to naturalize ourselves in the community, and so to domesticate ourselves in the very households of the people, as to apprehend without hesitation the most distant allusions to their political, religious and private institutions. In short, we should become, as it were, identified with them in habit, in feeling and in opinion, so as to have precisely the same thoughts excited in our minds and the same views of things suggested by the language which the writer employs, that were presented on its perusal to the minds of his contemporaries. It is to our ignorance or to a disregard of these circumstances, that we

must ascribe much of the obscurity which envelopes all ancient writings. We come to the reading of them with all our modern notions and prejudices; and when perchance we find in them words corresponding either in sound or in the opinion of some modern commentator to words in our own language, we immediately attribute to the ancient author all the ideas and opinions, no matter how complex and artificial, which modern use has connected with these terms. Thus, in reading the writings of the ancients, instead of learning what they believed and thought, we in fact are often merely learning how to express our own opinions and thoughts in their words. There is no doctrine in modern philosophy or theology which may not be proved by this process, and with but little ingenuity too, to have prevailed eighteen centuries ago; and for which the advocate of the doctrine cannot produce words, which if taken by themselves and without reference to any other considerations will assuredly imply all that he wishes to prove.

It is particularly important, in reading a book which professes to give an account of any change that has been effected in the *opinions* of men, or to record the circumstances accompanying the production of that change, that the opinions which previously existed and which were supplanted by the new system should be familiarly known. The opposition that would naturally be made to any innovation of the kind, the objections and prejudices that would have to be combated, and the controversies that would result from the struggle for existence between the conflicting sets of opinions, can only be understood by knowing the sentiments and

feelings which generally prevailed at the time when the new doctrines were promulgated.

To apply these remarks to the subject before us. In reading the Epistles of Paul, we should remember that the writer was a Jew—that he had been educated in all the peculiarities of the Jewish economy—that he lived and conversed among Jews—and that Jews constituted no small portion of the churches to which his letters are addressed. We should expect therefore to find in these writings difficulties and perplexities essentially of a Jewish growth. Jewish opinions, conceptions, customs and modes of speech must necessarily occur in such writings, and that too not sparingly. It is natural to suppose that the apostle, as every reasonable and sensible man will do, accommodated himself to the circumstances in which he was placed. He used the language and the modes of expression which were prevalent and understood by his countrymen. He adopted the form and the nature of his instructions to the comprehension and character of his readers. He reasoned with them on their own grounds and in their own way. In arguing with them he frequently passes over in silence, or admits as true, the common prejudices and errors of the times, and in cases which did not affect the great objects of his mission he does not appear to be very solicitous to expose their falsity. For he had too much sense to go out of his way to denounce every opinion which time had consecrated. He was too deeply engrossed in developing the important and characteristic features of the new dispensation, to think of correcting whatever might be erroneous in the common notions of the times, or of delivering his sentiments upon disputed

points of philosophy. He knew too well the nature of man to think of combating every prejudice and rooting out every error. In his *mode* of reasoning he exhibits the same prudence and discretion. He employs no novel mode of argument or illustration, but adopts those of his own country and age. In short, in all his endeavors to establish the new religion he seems never to lose sight of the peculiar character, condition and opinions of his countrymen. And if we wish to understand his writings, we must become acquainted with those circumstances and principles to which they refer, and to which in some measure they were accommodated. We must carry ourselves back to the age of the apostle, and learn the opinions and sentiments of the men of those times—the persons to whom his letters were addressed. We should remember that they are not regular didactic treatises, but familiar discourses on the peculiar difficulties and disputes of the times. The Epistles of Paul were in some sense the controversial writings of that day; and to be comprehended, they should be regarded and studied as such.

IV. The two remaining sources of the difficulty which we experience in understanding St Paul's Epistles may be best considered in connexion. These are, the form in which these writings are presented, and the manner in which we usually read them. By a most strange and unfortunate arrangement these letters, which are coherent discourses, are, as well as the historical books, broken into chapters and verses. This arrangement, it is well known, is a modern abuse. The consequence of it has been, that men have been led to read these letters in pieces—a chapter or two at a time. They have consid-

ered each verse as a separate and distinct proposition, stating some particular fact, declaring some particular truth, or inculcating some particular precept; and accordingly they have paid little regard to the train of argument or the connexion of the discourse. Now every one will readily admit that were one of his own letters treated in this way—were it divided and sub-divided into minute fragments, and the portions put separately into the hands of a stranger to be read as independent sentences, it would appear full of obscurity. How can we expect that the letters of Paul should appear intelligible when divided and read in the same perverse way? If we would read one of his letters with understanding, we must read it through at once, or at least large portions of it, neglecting the artificial divisions into which it has been crumbled, and attending only to the natural train of discourse.

Such I conceive to be the principal reasons why the Epistles of St Paul are hard to be understood. They are the occasional letters of a man of ardent feelings, written nearly two thousand years ago, in a peculiar state of society, and in a season of great excitement and controversy. Now we ought not to expect to understand such writings without taking some pains about it. We must be willing to study them with care and attention and to exercise our judgment and reflection in their perusal. We shall then see new light continually breaking out from their dark folds, and shall find in them the indications of the same fervid eloquence that made Felix tremble on his tribunal and almost persuaded Agrippa to be a Christian.

A. YOUNG.

